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FIELD & STREAM

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FROM LEFT: MIKE SUDAL; ADAM VOORHES

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FROM THE EDITOR

F&S

This Is Our Land

SPORTSMEN NEED TO SPEAK UP NOW TO STOP A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE FUTURE OF OUR SPORTS

I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK that if Theodore Roosevelt could see the current scam being peddled to American sportsmen he'd be fighting mad.

I'm talking about the proposal to transfer ownership of federal lands to states. Make no mistake: This will lead to a loss of access to some of the country's best hunting and fishing grounds, mean fewer opportunities for millions of sportsmen, and decimate the contribution that hunting and fishing make to our national economy. It will seriously threaten the North American model of wildlife management, which is based on the idea that wildlife belongs to the people, that hunters are the best way to manage our game populations, and that the ability to hunt, fish, and camp on public lands is the right of every American, not just those with deep pockets.

Simply put, state treasuries cannot afford to manage these lands. In 2012 alone, the feds spent $700 million just fighting forest fires. We can get a hint of the likely solution by looking at the places under consideration for transfer: only lands with high-dollar viewscapes or some extractive value like minerals, crops, or timber. These game-rich areas that currently belong to all of us will be developed or sold to large corporations, degrading critical habitat and locking out millions of sportsmen.

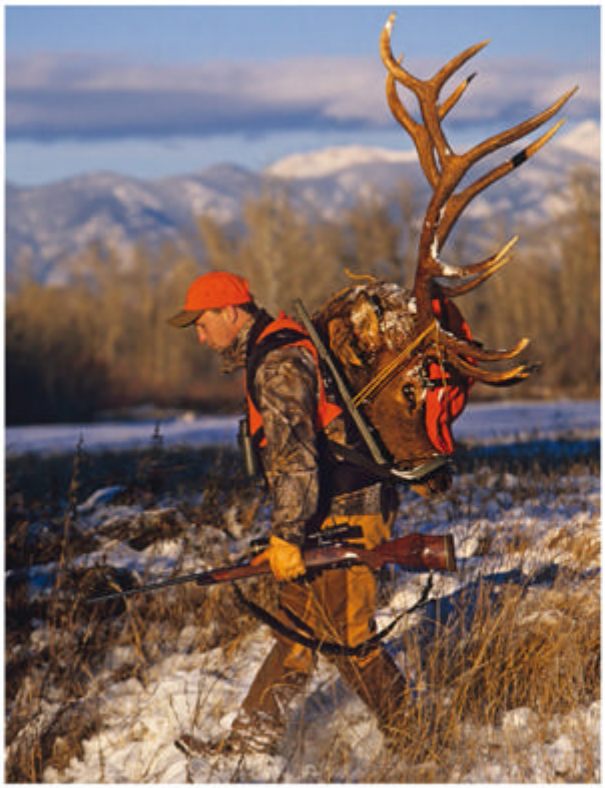
Over 70 percent of Western sportsmen hunt on public lands. Access to places to hunt is routinely cited as one of the big challenges hunters face, so the loss of public land will be devastating to the future of our sports.

Through my job I've been able to hunt some great private hunting properties. I've also hunted in Europe, where without adequate amounts of public land, hunting is almost exclusively a rich man's sport. But honestly my most memorable hunts have been on spectacular public land in the West, open to anyone with a license and the ambition to explore.

The good news is there are a lot of sportsmen in this country, and when we speak together, our public servants listen. Already rallies of sportsmen in states like Montana are having a big impact. And a coalition of conservation groups, hunter's rights organizations, and outdoor recreation companies are joining together to battle this threat. Please visit **sportsmensaccess.org** and sign the petition to let our lawmakers know that hunters and anglers matter. TR would be proud.



Anthony Licata, Editor-in-Chief
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This Could Be You
A successful elk hunter on public land in Montana.

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"You don't need to have played in the NFL to cover football, and you don't need to have run for office to report on politics, but if you don't fish a lot, the audience is going to call you on it," says editor-at-large and FlyTalk blogger **Kirk Deeter** (p. 38). He strives to put a line out at least 150 days a year, mostly on the Arkansas, Colorado, and South Platte Rivers.



"I used to pore over Tap's Tips in my grandfather's collection of F&S issues," says photographer **Peter Frank Edwards,** who caught snapper and grouper alongside Islamorada legend Richard Stanczyk in between shots for "How I Fish" (p. 60). Edwards splits his time between Maine and Charleston, S.C., where he's a contributing photographer for *Garden & Gun.*

MILLER MOBLEY (LICATA); DUSAN SMETANA (HUNTER); TIM ROMANO (DEETER)


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STRUT PATROL

✖ Clint George, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, scaled the side of this grain bin to get a better vantage point on a group of nearly two dozen turkeys—including six mature gobblers and eight jakes—about 400 yards away on a southeast Georgia farm last spring. "I've always been deployed during turkey season, so it was my first time visiting the property where my buddies have permission to hunt," George says. "We drove by these birds, but the grass was so tall that we could only see their heads, so I got the idea to crawl up the tower's ladder and get a good look at them." The birds disappeared into the treeline that day, and it rained for the next 24 hours, but George and his friend Jimmy Hall took down two of the gobblers not far from the grain bin on the following morning. "Jimmy worked his magic on a box call, a slate, and two mouth calls. Two toms came out of the trees and right in to our decoys—a strutter and two hens. They flared up and started strutting at 100 yards, and again at 50, but we were patient and dropped them both at 30." —KRISTYN BRADY



CHEERS & JEERS

FEELINGS OF KINSHIP, FUN LITTLE DEER DROPPERS, ICE-HOLE EXPERTS, AND THE HOLLYWOOD MANURE



DIGGING INTO THE PAST

Cheers seems too feeble a compliment on your "Great Family Stories." All the yarns stirred deep emotions, but Phil Bourjaily's piece exhumed sentiments I'd deposited under decades of missed opportunities.
Frank R. Baner, Powell, Wyo.

GREAT AND POWERFUL

As a young boy, I was fervent about fishing, hunting, and trapping, so I read every outdoor magazine that I could get my hands on, with F&S being my absolute favorite. Your Feb. 2015 issue has reignited that spark and conjured up the ghosts of Ted Trueblood, Robert Ruark, and Ed Zern. Thank you for that.

Rick Cypher, *Thornton, Colo.*

I read with interest each of the "Great Family Stories," and I saw myself in many of them. My own experience hasn't been as tragic as Phil Bourjaily's, but it has been just as funny as Dave Hurteau's. T. Edward Nickens's piece has me looking forward to spending more time in the great outdoors with my young grandchildren.

Mike Guillot, *Alex City, Ala.*

Phil Bourjaily's story about "Dad's Gun" truly hit home for me, and I feel that he and I share a bond that goes beyond hunting. My dad did not have hobbies (what he most liked to do was travel on business), and he took me hunting, for pheasants, exactly once. I made a long shot on a lone rooster and had it mounted some 40 years ago. It will always be "Dad's pheasant" in my mind. It's really all that I have to remember him by.

Charles Maye, *Austin, Texas*

"Dad's Gun" is a true piece of literature—it spoke directly to my heart. The gun that was passed along to me is a post-'64 Winchester Model 94 in .30/30. Every time I open my safe, I have the urge to restore and refinish it. Unfortunately, I cannot erase the scratches that were placed by the previous owner, my dad, but a cleaning might do us both some good. Thank you for reminding me that hearts can never be repaired by words left unsaid.

Mike Morris,
Rochester Hills, Mich.

BROTHER DEAREST

Having read Bill Heavey's account of his childhood with his "brother" David E. Petzal in "Sibling Riflery" (A Sportsman's Life), I must assume that he would find it great sport to poke at sleeping bears with a sharp stick. Instead of an apple, I would have handed Bill an acorn and increased the yardage a bit.

Rick Pinter, *Phillips, Wis.*

Thanks for making me laugh at the thought of Petzal as an indignant child. Let's hope he allows Heavey to use him as writing fodder for a bit longer, before smiting him from Mount Petzal.

Steven Ready, *Papillion, Neb.*

DAVID E. PETZAL RESPONDS: Bill Heavey is a hissing and a byword. He is the small dust of the balance. Like most of what he writes, that chunk of drivel was total fabrication. My actual brother and I spent our childhoods sending each other to the emergency ward on an alternating basis. Heavey would not have survived more than a few weeks.

STANDING O/U

Great review of over/unders for less than $1,000 (Field Test). I bet that young first-time gun buyers will especially appreciate it. The Stevens 555 is a particularly good deal for someone looking to buy a

READER TIP



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Dominic Estey,
Graysville, Ind.

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Mark-1, *via fieldandstream.com*

HERE'S THE KICKER

I feel compelled to say amen in response to David E. Petzal's "Down Load" and "The Recoil Hater's Guide to the Universe" (Rifles). After trying several different heavy-kicking cartridges, I settled on the .257 Roberts more than 30 years ago. Besides being a dependable deer dropper, the cartridge has a high fun factor. It's rewarding to handload and enjoyable to practice with.
George Kromrey, *Sullivan, Mo.*

Thank you for affirming what I have been telling the skeptics for years: You don't need to take the beating of a big round to kill most North American game. I use a .243 Win. for mule deer, antelope, and whitetails, and I've never been undergunned. If a man wants to use a .300 Win. Mag. to do the same, that's fine. It's his shoulder to bruise.
Luis Lozada, *Fairborn, Ohio*

THEY KNOW THE DRILL

Mark Modoski says he's carved countless holes with a hand auger ("Ice and Easy," Sportsman's Notebook), and I've drilled a lot of holes by hand, too. I completely agree that a 6-inch auger (I use a Mora) is way better than an 8-inch for the vast majority of pike and walleye fishing.
johnmn, *via fieldandstream.com*

No gas auger? Here are my four tips for using a hand auger: (1) Go back to the store, (2) return the hand auger, (3) purchase a power auger—gas, electric, propane, drill conversion—it doesn't matter which, and (4) let 'er rip.
klein350, *via fieldandstream.com*

DOG HUNTER'S DOGHOUSE

I've never been coyote hunting, but Ben Romans's "Snow Dogs" (The Season) has given me the bug. I just planned a hunt with a buddy to get a coyote off his property. That'll give me one more opportunity to be in the woods, so, Ben, I apologize ahead of time if you ever receive a rude letter from my wife.
ARbowhunter, *via fieldandstream.com*

HOLD YOUR FIRE

Petzal might want to go a bit easier on Tom Selleck (Ask Petzal) despite his appearance in the worst gun-related movie scene ever. He is certainly better than anyone else coming out of Hollywood—kind of like reaching into a 10-ton manure spreader and pulling out a gold ring. Just be happy it is there.
Ed Fry, *via e-mail*

HIS LIGHTBULB JUST WENT OFF

My living room has two end tables begging for outdoor-themed lamps, and I like the idea behind using a Euro skull mount ("Head Lamp," Sportsman's Notebook), but I don't care for the antler-shed base. I'd go with a simple walnut disk to hide the cord better. I'd probably opt for a post made from a chunk of an old gun barrel, rather than an arrow shaft.
Ontario Honker, *via fieldandstream.com*

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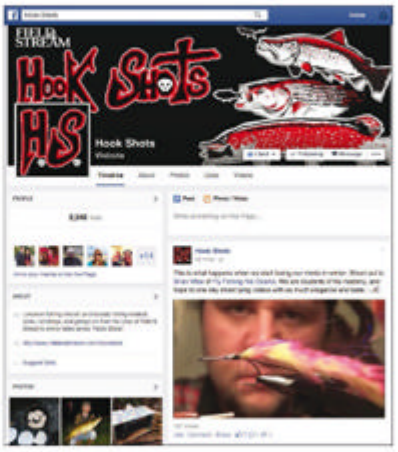
WEB SERIES

GET YOUR SHOTS

A whole new season of *Hook Shots* kicks off in the Keys

IT WOULDN'T be fishing season without all the hard-core tactics, punk rock tunes, and on-the-road antics of Fishing editor Joe Cermele's original Web series, *Hook Shots*, and this month marks not only the Season 7 premiere but also the show's 50th episode. To honor the occasion, the original crew—Cermele, Capt. Eric Kerber, and F&S editor-in-chief Anthony Licata—ditched the Northeast for sun, fun, fish, and beer in the Florida Keys. Go to *fieldandstream.com/hookshots* to check out what the boys were up to while the rest of us were shoveling a couple feet of snow.

Next, head over to Facebook and like the new Hook Shots page to fill your news feed with never-before-seen outtakes, extras, giveaways, and fly-tying videos. Cermele, Kerber, and some of your favorite guest anglers from past seasons will share the new gear they're stoked about, the viral clips they're watching, and the buzz from their local waters. They'd love to hear from you, share your photos and videos, and send you some swag. Join the party at *facebook.com/fshookshots*.



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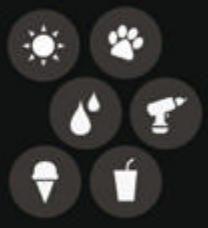
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CAMPFIRE

NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE EXPERTS

SUDDEN SILVER

When Mother Nature adds a big pinch of salt to your home river, you'd better come prepared

By Joe Cermele



ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE SUDAL



MY BUDDY Jim Fee saw the first striped bass from the front casting deck. The fish went maybe 27 inches and paid us little mind as the pontoons of my raft drifted above its back in 3 feet of water. In the last quarter mile of our float, we'd seen channel catfish, shortnose sturgeon, and a fat smallmouth crashing bait near the bank. At first, the striper was just another species checked off, something cool to see. But then we spotted another, and another. In the blink of an eye, we were in a blitz. On all sides, clouds of terrified herring flashed silver and purple as bass surged in for the kill.

I know this stretch of the Delaware River intimately. We were only a few miles above the tideline but well over 40 from the salt front. In summer, this is smallmouth water—a mix of slack holes, flats, and giant boulders; you can wade from Jersey to Pennsylvania in most places. The high-rise office buildings in distant Trenton look the same now, but the river is a different place in April. Running high and cold, it's a pipeline to the ocean. Anyone who fishes coastal rivers from Maine to Georgia understands the magic window in spring when anadromous species move up and mix with resident fish—and that it doesn't last long.

Earlier that morning, Fee and I had been anchored at the edge of a mid-river eddy, swinging for American shad, another oceanic migrant that makes a massive spawning run up the undammed Delaware this month. They don't eat now, but they'll smack a shad dart or flutter spoon flashed in their faces—and when they do, you've got a serious light-tackle challenge on your hands (see "Shad Hacks," p. 40). Shad have paper-thin mouths that tear very easily, so the trick to handling their fast runs and athletic leaps is keeping your drag set light. Of the 12 we'd hooked, half made it to the net, including a 6-pound personal best for Fee. Shad had been the plan from the outset, so as I rowed downstream toward the takeout, we were totally satisfied with our day. Until we saw the stripers.



Plan A
Jim Fee, with a Delaware River American shad.

Fee fired a long cast to a far-off cluster of boulders, and we watched stripers charge out from behind every one to take a swipe at the lure.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LIGHT

We hadn't planned on the bass, and now we had a big problem. All we'd brought were light spinning rods, and some of these stripers were pushing 40 inches. Given the clear water and bright sun, we didn't expect to see stripers at this time of day, but there were at least 15 in eyeshot, and more kept appearing as the current pulled us downstream. Despite being undergunned, Fee tied on an 8-inch plug—one of three I happened to have in my bag—and made a short lob. Four bass charged the bait, fighting over it, until one finally committed. The reel's drag screamed for just a couple of seconds before the soft rod caused the hook to pop loose.

I dropped the oars and fired one of the other plugs, splashing it down near the bank. On the second twitch, a bass jumped all over it, leaving a 3-foot hole in the surface. The fish surged upriver, pushing a school of herring ahead of him, and then came unglued. Our rods just didn't have enough backbone to sink the hooks; the line wasn't heavy enough to crank down the drags. I tried dropping the anchor to keep us in the action, but it wouldn't catch on the small cobblestones. The river was too fast.

Slipping away, with so many fish around us, we turned frantic. I jumped on the oars, trying to back-row. Fee fired a long bomb to a far-off cluster of boulders, and we watched stripers charge out from behind every one to take a swipe at the lure as it passed. He came tight again but lost the fish after a few headshakes. Then all of a sudden, as fast as we'd come into the fray, we drifted right out of it. No matter how hard I rowed, we kept sliding downriver, so I maneuvered us over to the river bank.

Parked there for a minute, I shook my head. Two nights prior, another friend and I had floated this same stretch with beefy saltwater spinning rigs loaded with 30-pound braid. Our metal-lip swimmers, Bomber Long A's, and 10-inch Hogy lures dangled from 30-pound fluorocarbon leaders. We'd caught nothing that night, and this morning I had eyed that gear leaning in a corner of the garage, wondering if I should take it, just in case. Hours later, I'd have given anything for one of those rods. Somehow, I'd forgotten the one ironclad rule on coastal rivers in spring: Be ready for anything.

"All we can do is drag the raft back up and take the drift again," I told Fee, knowing it would be a tough half-mile trek—and that we probably still wouldn't land anything. He didn't even think about it.

"Let's do it," he said, jumping out and grabbing the front lean bar. "We're here now, the bass are here now, and in a few weeks they'll all be gone." F&S

GEAR TIP

GET REALISTIC

When herring run up coastal rivers, they become the primary forage for everything from migratory stripers to resident walleyes and smallmouths. Problem is, it's illegal to possess live herring on many rivers, and when schools of the baitfish get thick, fooling gamefish on artificials can be tough. So go early in the run, before the river is pulsing with herring, and use plugs that match them as closely as possible. You know that triple-jointed bait with the holographic eyes and photorealistic scale pattern you scoffed at in the shop? Like the LiveTarget Blueback Herring shown here ($19; livetargetlures.com)? Now is the time to put it into play. —J.C.



JIM FEE (TOP)



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THE WILD CHEF

VENISON POSOLE

Still have a deer roast in your freezer from last season? Here's a delicious reason to thaw it By Jonathan Miles



POSOLE (pronounced poh-SOH-lay) is a Mexican stew that dates back centuries. It's traditionally made by simmering pork with chiles and hominy (hulled corn kernels), but adding venison to the pot lends the stew a richer and more vibrant character. The chef and cookbook writer David Tanis calls for a combination of pork shoulder and pork belly in his fantastic recipe for posole, which we've adapted here by swapping in venison for the shoulder but retaining the unctuous pork belly. If you can't find belly, just use some fatty pork shoulder. Dried hominy is widely available in the Latin section of supermarkets; if canned is your only option, however, drain and rinse it and add during the final half hour of cooking.

CHRIS LANIER/APOSTROPHE (FOOD STYLING); PAIGE HICKS (PROP STYLING)

Photograph by PLAMEN PETKOV

1 Drain the soaked hominy and put it into a Dutch oven or large soup pot. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Let simmer briskly for 1 hour.

2 While the hominy is cooking, toast the dried chiles by placing them in a cast-iron skillet over high heat and shaking and turning them until slightly charred and fragrant. Slit the chiles lengthwise with a knife (you may want to wear gloves) and remove and discard the seeds and stems. Place the chiles in a saucepan with 4 cups of water and simmer for 30 minutes. Let cool. Transfer the chiles to a blender and purée to a smooth paste, adding just enough of the cooking water so the purée has the consistency of a milkshake.

3 Generously season the pork belly and venison with salt and pepper. When the hominy has cooked for 1 hour, add the meats, onion, garlic, bay leaf, and cumin. Add enough water to cover by 2 inches and return to a simmer. Simmer over low heat, uncovered, for about 3 hours, occasionally skimming fat from the surface and adding more water as needed. Test the meat for doneness; it will be very tender. The hominy will be soft but still chewy.

4 Stir in the chile purée and simmer for an additional 10 minutes.

5 To serve, ladle the stew into bowls, and allow guests to garnish their bowls with the chopped white onions, cilantro, and lime wedges.

Serves 8 to 10

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lb. venison, cut into 1½-inch chunks
- 1½ lb. dried hominy (posole), soaked overnight in cold water
- 3 oz. dried red New Mexico chiles
- 2 lb. fresh pork belly, cut into 1½-inch chunks
- 1 large yellow onion, peeled and halved
- 1 Tbsp. chopped garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tsp. ground cumin
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 cups finely diced white onion, soaked in ice water, for garnish
- Lime wedges and chopped cilantro, for garnish

DRINK PAIRING



OLÉ FASHIONED

A dark Mexican beer, such as Negra Modelo, would be good company here. Or bust out the aged tequila for a cocktail called a Oaxaca Old Fashioned. Here's how to mix one:

Stir together 1½ oz. of reposado tequila, ½ oz. of mezcal, a dash or two of Angostura bitters, and a teaspoon of agave nectar (or simple syrup) with ice, and garnish with an orange peel. —J.M.

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RIFLES

ON MISSING

What matters isn't whether you whiff but how you handle it when you do **By David E. Petzal**

EVERYONE MISSES. I can tell you, in excruciating detail, about every one of my agonizing whiffs, even though some go back nearly 50 years. The hits, except for a very few, have lost their vivid colors.

If you want the true measure of a man's character, watch what happens when he misses a big shot, not what happens when he hits.

LEAD SLINGERS

In Wyoming, I watched a nitwit fire 19 rounds at a yearling antelope buck standing a shade over 100 yards away. He did this out of a truck window and seemed to think the whole thing was hilarious. The antelope succumbed to the law of averages on the 19th shot.

In Zambia, I watched a Greek hunter, who was one of the handsomest men I've ever seen, and who had a blonde girlfriend who was even better looking, try to sight in a Holland & Holland .375 H&H. Shooting over a table, he couldn't hit paper at 100 yards. I stopped counting the boxes of ammo he went through at six. Then I concentrated on ogling the girlfriend. Finally it got too noisy, and I wandered down to the Luangwa River to listen to the hippos fart, which was nearly as loud.

All of this was fairly benign. Sometimes it isn't. In northeastern New Mexico, I heard a fusillade that would have fit in at the Battle of Antietam. I walked up a hill to find a hunter and his guide surrounded by spent .338 cases. They'd lucked into a bull that the guide swore would make Boone and Crockett, but the hunter had opened up when the animal was way out of range and hit him in the guts with the first shot.

Humped in agony, the bull shuffled away, with the hunter still flinging lead. He took 19 shots—there's that number again—without another hit. The hunter posted a reward of $10,000 for anyone who came in with the antlers, but no dice. The elk had vanished.

I hunted with a man in Africa who should not have carried a rifle. He was a tormented soul, a combination of poor physical condition, uncontrollable nerves, and absent hand-eye coordination. He could not hit anything, and he whined about it constantly, blaming his rifle, the trackers, the game, and the professional hunter. This last was a mistake, as our PH was a nice enough guy but took no crap from man or beast.



I stopped counting the boxes of ammo he went through at six. Finally it got too noisy, and I wandered down to the Luangwa River to listen to the hippos fart.

"Tom," he said sweetly, "probably it is your rifle. Why don't you take a rest over that termite hill and see if it's sighted in?"

Tom got a good, steady rest over what was actually a live safari ant mound and fired. A moment passed. Then an expression of horror came over his face. He shrieked, and ran off into the African sunset, tearing off his shirt and slapping at the little fiends, waves of fat billowing in the fading orange light.

MISSING, THE JOKE

A rancher I knew in eastern Montana used missing as a source of cowboy humor. Periodically, he'd host an Easterner who would be unhinged by the distances, and by the experience of seeing more than one deer a week. For these folks he reserved a special treat.

At the bottom of a dark coulee, the rancher would set up a 50-gallon oil drum, over which he'd throw a ratty gray blanket. At one end of the drum, he'd affix a moth-eaten mule deer mount. Under the blanket, he'd place a couple of sticks of dynamite and blasting caps.

After his pilgrim had missed a couple of easy shots on real deer and was sufficiently demoralized, the rancher would wait until nearly last light and come to a skidding halt in sight of the bogus deer.

"Look," he would bellow, "down in that coulee, that's the biggest damn deer I've ever seen! Shoot him! Shoot!"

The pilgrim, nearly in heart-attack mode, would see something that vaguely looked like a deer down in the gloom and fire at it.

"You missed! Shoot again!"

The pilgrim would, and there were two ways this could end. If nothing happened the rancher would say simply, "Gee, he sure was a nice deer,"



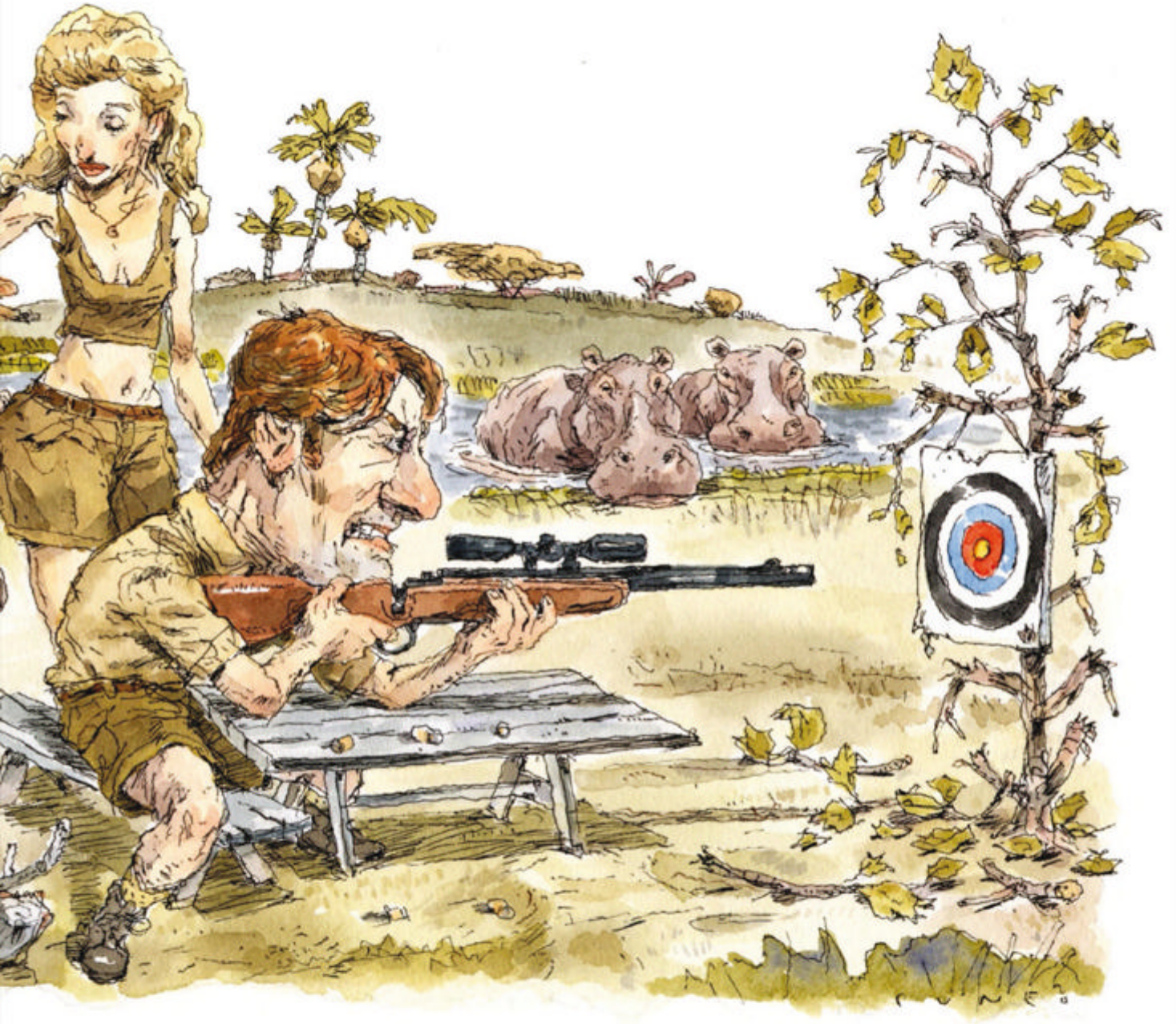
and drive away with a hunter who was deeply in shock. Or the poor nimrod would hit a blasting cap, bringing a flash, a thunderclap, and a rain of dirt, causing the rancher to comment:

"Boy, you sure nailed him."

OFF-TARGET EXEMPLARS

I belong to a club that competes in multiple shooting and casting events. In the '50s, '60s, and '70s, we had a member who excelled in every discipline. He was not only the all-around best but was a model of sportsmanship. I'll tell you that

Illustration by **JOHN CUNEO**



his name was Dave George, because he should be remembered.

On one occasion, Dave missed a skeet target, which he knew would cost him a championship. His exact words, which have since passed into legend, were "Oh dear, that's going to be very costly." (By comparison, I know of one skeet shooter who in the same situation hurled his Midas Grade Browning into the Caribbean.)

At a rifle event, where he was dead certain for a victory, he missed a whole string of shots and lost. Dave did not miss whole strings of shots, so he checked his rifle. Some jealous bastard had twirled the dials on his scope as it stood in the rack.

Dave could have gone to the rules committee, and gotten to shoot again—such was his reputation for honesty. But he didn't. He never even mentioned the incident, and it's known today only because onlookers pieced things together.

A friend of mine suffered from a long run of bad shooting. He either missed deer or hit them poorly, and it went on for several seasons. He never complained or made excuses. He would track until the blood and the hope ran out, and he'd take his teasing like a man—until it got so bad that the ribbing stopped.

Then he took a shot that looked like a repeat of the rest. It took half a dozen expert trackers to find the buck, but when they finally did, it was a monster. My friend was ecstatic—and we were more so. I've never seen a camp so happy at someone else's success.

Missing happens. But in doing so we reveal to the world what we really are. You can lose a championship or an animal, but by your conduct you can gain something much more important. FS



SHOTGUNS

IN WITH THE NEW

We may love older shotguns, but modern models beat them handily

By Phil Bourjaily

NEW GUNS ARE LIKE modern cars. They are designed on computers, built by machines, and have less steel and more plastic than their predecessors. They lack individuality and character. My black-synthetic-stocked Beretta 3901 semiauto waterfowl gun is the firearms equivalent of my Honda CRV: Put the gun in a rack at duck camp, or the car in a crowded parking lot, and I'd be hard-pressed to pick out either one from all the others. But both are trouble-free, they pollute less (the Beretta runs on steel), and with minimal care they will run forever.

So you give up some aesthetics with most new guns. What do you get in return? Choke tubes, 3- and 3½-inch chambers, any-load capability, steel compatibility, softer recoil pads, easily alterable stock length, light weight, chambers that don't rust—the list goes on and on.

Then there's reliability: A few years ago I shot a Browning Silver semiauto without cleaning it to see how long it would run. After 1,500 rounds it had some trouble cycling very light ¾-ounce target loads. Try doing that with an old semiauto.

COMPUTERIZED CRAFTSMANSHIP

The new Benelli 828U exemplifies this new age of shotguns, and not merely because its name reads like a vanity plate. Benelli's first-ever over/under, the 828U is most definitely not your father's Superposed. It's a fresh, 21st-century take on the o/u, long on new ideas and nontraditional materials, short on Old World handcraftsmanship. Benelli guns are designed by engineers on computers, built by machines, assembled and packed by humans, and then warehoused by a robot forklift.

"We don't build Benellis here," says Benelli's Andrea Luini. "We clone them."

Indeed, some of the world's best guns, from English Purdeys to Italian Fabbris to America's own Connecticut Shotgun Manufacturing guns, are now made by computer-numerical-controlled machinery up to the final fit and finish, which is then done by highly skilled craftsmen.

Cost savings is another benefit. The tight tolerances to which Benelli's machines work means no hand fitting is needed on the 828U, which is unheard of with break-action guns. Even barrel regulation (adjusting both barrels to shoot to the same point of impact) is no longer required. While the 828U isn't cheap at $2,500, it would cost more if those steps were necessary. Moreover, all parts are completely interchangeable, so you'll be able to buy extra barrels without having them fitted to your gun.

The 828U, like so many modern guns, makes use of nontraditional materials. An aluminum-alloy receiver and a carbon-fiber rib keep its weight under 7 pounds in 12 gauge (a polymer recoil reduction system in the stock offsets the recoil of heavy loads). About $1.29 worth of plastic shims enable you to tailor the gun's fit through a wide range of dimensions instead of paying hundreds for a gunsmith's stock work.

Last fall, I found it carried and pointed as well as or better than many traditional o/u's I have hunted with. I even think its futuristic lines are handsome.

That said, I'm always pleased when I see slight overruns in the checkering on a new gun—a sign it was done by imperfect human hands, not infallible machines. The real truth is, I like them all, new guns and old, but if what you want in a shotgun is practicality, efficiency, and versatility in the field, it's time to send in the clones. FS



Contemporary Classic Benelli's 828U has cryogenically smoothed bores, and adjustable drop, cast, and comb height.

TIP OF THE MONTH

TEACH YOUR OFF SIDE TO SHOOT

I have only had to shoot one turkey from my off-side shoulder (for me, the right), but the day a silent bird came in from the left, I was glad I had practiced the shot. It's difficult, if not impossible, to scoot yourself around so you can shoot with your dominant hand without spooking a bird. If you use an optic, you'll be able to shoot with both eyes open; otherwise, close your dominant eye. Use field loads when you practice because turkey-load recoil is bad enough on the side you're accustomed to shooting from, and horrendous when you try switch-hitting. —P.B.



HIGH POINT

All of this ground is easier to cover if you start from a high spot and work your way down. The Forest Service cabin at **Summit Ridge Lookout** (recreation.gov) is about as high—6,096 feet—as you can get. It's also a stone's throw from the Wyoming border, giving you the option of hunting the east or west each day.

GUT CHECK

You're going to burn a lot of calories hunting these gobblers, so swing by **Donna's Main Street Diner** in Newcastle, Wyo., for heaping portions of delicious comfort food at great prices. I highly recommend the oatmeal pancakes at breakfast, and a "big and thick" burger and hand-cut fries for lunch.

RUN THE RIDGE

Forget the notion that Nebraska is flat. The Pine Ridge region is studded with buttes just as steep, if not as tall, as any found in the Black Hills. It also has 200,000 acres of public land, much of it prime turkey habitat. **Fort Robinson State Park** (outdoornebraska.gov) near Crawford, Neb., has cabins and soldier's barracks for rent.

UP AND RUNNING

Heading west out of Rapid City, S.D., take a left off I-90 2 miles before you hit the Wyoming border. Here, Bob Spiers of **Crow Creek Wildlife** (605-642-2523) will give you an initiation into chasing turkeys in the Black Hills. And I do mean *chasing*. While Merriam's can be easy to call, they're the track stars of the turkey woods.

CATCH THE DRIFT

If your trip falls on a weekend, swing on in to the **Drifter Cookshack & Bunkhouse** (highplainshomestead.com) northwest of Crawford for a cowboy steak cookout held every Friday and Saturday night. Surrounded by rugged badlands, the Cookshack and nearby Dirty Creek Saloon also have cold beer on hand.

BURNING CURVE

A 2012 forest fire concentrated birds onto Pine Ridge's unburned areas. While parts of the **Ponderosa WMA** got scorched, some surrounding lands went untouched. Expect hunting pressure early in the season, but by mid May the woods should be silent—save for lonely toms' gobbles thundering through the pines.



ESCAPES

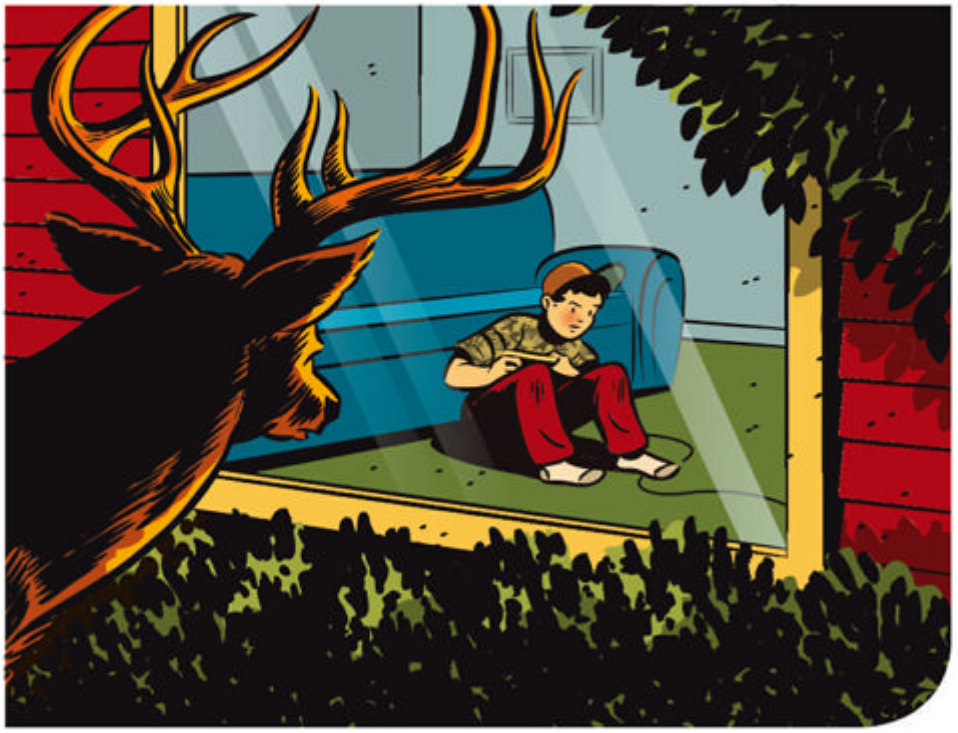
MERRIAM'S MARATHON

Plot a long-weekend road trip hunting toms in the high plains

By David Draper

A SPRING ROAD TRIP is a bucket-list adventure for many turkey hunters, and South Dakota's Black Hills have long been a popular destination for those wishing to tag a Merriam's. The region's same dark ridges—and burgeoning turkey populations—extend into Wyoming and Nebraska. With a little planning, you can chase white-tipped gobblers (on the cheap) in all three states over a long weekend.

Illustration by KATHERINE BAXTER



Q&A

David E. Petzal answers your questions about guns, shooting, hunting, and life

A lot of my friends play hunting and fishing video games. What do you think of these types of games?

—ZACHARY ZWIEBEL, LIMA, OHIO

A: I've seen very few, but the ones I have tried are as idiotic as just about every other form of amusement that comes up on a screen. It's much better to actually hunt and fish than it is to play a video game. The degree to which our young folks stare into screens borders on the psychotic.

Q: *As a former soldier and now a machinist, I am OCD about things being "dress right dress" and holding tight tolerances. Am I crazy for trying to get the scope-ring gaps exactly the same all the way around? It drives me nuts if they look the slightest bit askew.*

—TIM SIPES, MARSHALL, TEXAS

A: You want all the scope-ring screws to be equally tight, or you'll torque the scope clockwise or counterclockwise and your vertical crosshair will tilt. So yes, it makes sense to have the ring gaps as close to equal as you can get them without going nuts about it. But perfectly equal? As big a waste of time as hunting and fishing video games.

Q: *Will the AR trend end soon, or will American rifles continue to evolve off that platform?*

—JOHN M. THORPE, CHICO, CALIF.

A: ARs are the wave of the future. The AR stock is form following function. ARs kick less. ARs use small cartridges, which are cheaper to buy. ARs can be customized at home without a diploma from a gunsmith school. ARs kick less. Their only disadvantage is the need for a somewhat high level of maintenance compared with a bolt action, but I think you'll see that diminish over time. And they kick less.



ASK PETZAL

Q: *I have read that the Ruger M77 has a slightly oversize bore and is therefore less accurate, and good only for shots inside 200 yards. Is this true?*

—KEVIN WATTS, METAMORA, ILL.

A: In a word, no. How could a major rifle maker stay competitive if it used substandard barrels? Ruger has used a number of barrel suppliers over the years, and some of them have been less wonderful than others, but others have been very good indeed. I have shot some very accurate M77s.

Q: *How much longer will hunters be shooting lead bullets?*

—R.G. JONES, LOGAN, W.VA.

A: Probably a good many years. Right now, there is nothing I know of that can compete with lead both in ballistic properties or cost (the latter is the key factor). I do think that the use of lead will be curtailed more and more as time goes on, but I don't see it disappearing anytime soon.

Q: *I'm 14 years old, and I got $100 in cash for my birthday. I want to spend it all on a really good deer hunting knife. What do you recommend?* —JASON WILKES, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA.

A: I suggest that you go to ragweed forge.com and look at Helle knives, which are made in Norway, have laminated stainless blades, and sell in the $75 to $130 range. For a hunting knife, I don't know of anything better. Ragweed Forge itself is a hoot—very frank, honest evaluations of what the knives will and won't do. If you'd like me to suggest a model, I nominate the Helle Viking. FS

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR RIFLES EDITOR? Send it to askpetzal@fieldandstream.com. We cannot guarantee polite answers to all questions.

Illustration by **MARK MATCHO**

CONSERVATION

HEROES OF CONSERVATION

Volunteers improving wetlands, native trout habitat, and an iconic Western stream

By Kristyn Brady

1



NURTURING WETLANDS

SANDY BURRIS

SANDUSKY, OHIO

As president of the Friends of Magee Marsh, Burris helps raise funds and organize volunteers to improve and maintain its namesake wetland, a critical 1,800-acre stopover for waterfowl on the southern shore of Lake Erie. Originally a private hunting property, the marsh now provides duck and deer hunting, trapping, and ice fishing opportunities to the public. Burris and her group are responsible for implementing a $300,000 renovation of the boardwalk that protects the integrity of the marsh and provides access for anglers, trappers, and others. They also remove invasive garlic mustard plants that prevent the growth of native browse. "With only 30 active volunteers, I'm really proud of what we've been able to do so far," says Burris.

2



BOOSTING HABITAT

EDDIE KOCHMAN

DENVER, COLO.

Kochman has spent the last year advocating for the establishment of minimum stream flows and lake-level requirements by the Colorado Water Conservation Board to permanently protect fish and habitat on seven streams and two lakes in the Pike–San Isabel National Forest. If the measure is carried out, greenback cutthroat trout—a threatened native species—can be introduced into some of these areas. Kochman was also instrumental in urging the Bureau of Land Management to commit to an analysis of the impacts of energy development on 282,000 acres of wildlife habitat. "I hunt elk, mule deer, and antelope on BLM lands that are subject to drilling in the future, so I was privileged to play a role in that process."

3



TENDING A WATERWAY

MARY VAN FLEET

ISLAND PARK, IDAHO

Van Fleet helped found the first Idaho Master Naturalists chapter in 2007, and has led the group in partnering with state agencies and sportsmen's groups on stream restoration projects, fence repairs, and willow plantings benefiting the Henrys Fork of the Snake River. She has worked with landowners to keep cattle out of areas along Sheridan Creek, an important feeder stream, and has helped with Idaho Fish and Game's migratory waterfowl counts on Henrys Lake during every month of open water since 2008. "I volunteer because the Henrys Fork is a very special place," says Van Fleet, who's been fishing since she was 5 years old. "If you love living here, it's natural to feel responsible for its wildlife and world-class fishery."

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SUZAN GEORGE (BURRIS)

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THINK INSIDE THE BOX

An expert turkey-call maker reveals the intricacies of releasing the most perfect yelp

By T. Edward Nickens



Blow the Lid Off • These three box calls were crafted by noted turkey-call maker Tony Quarino.

I HOLD THE box call paddle like I'd grasp a newborn's tiny hand—gently, between the knuckles of my first and second finger. "You don't have to bear down hard," Tony Quarino tells me. "There's plenty of turkey in there. You just have to let it out."

I give the paddle a full swing, raking the bottom across the rounded edges of the sidewall rails, and there she is:

YEE-awk, YEE-awk, YEE-awk.

Those first three notes sound sweet and pure. But then the angle goes wrong, or I'm using too much pressure, because what comes next is more squawk than yelp, a yowling shriek that would send any gobbler scrambling for cover.

I've never been even a decent turkey caller, but I aim to change that this spring. And the way I see it, a fine way to learn how to get a turkey call out of a piece of wood is to watch an artist put the turkey call *into* the wood. Quarino has been making box calls for 13 years, and he's won a slew of awards. Plastic bins in his North Carolina woodshop are stuffed with ribbons and trophies. He describes call making as "an addiction." He lives just three hours from my house, and one afternoon before the spring opener, he invited me over to watch him work.

I stick like a late-spring tick to the Jersey transplant for the better part of a morning. Quarino is making a box call with a sound box carved from one solid piece of wood. All of his power tools—circular saw, table saw, band saw, belt sander—are on wheels, and Quarino rolls them in and out of place with practiced grace. He chisels out the sound box checkering by hand. In an hour, he's turned a plank of butternut into the basic outlines of a turkey call.

We walk over to a drill press with a tilting slide vise, which enables him to vary the angle and depth of the call's sidewalls. "Now things get serious," he says through gritted teeth.

The art and alchemy of making a call reside in the geometry of the box's walls and sound chamber; how the wood grain on top of the rails meets the wood grain on the underside of the paddle; and how friction between them vibrates the call's checkered sides. As Quarino drills out the inside of the sound box, tiny corkscrews of butternut worm out of the bit, sucked into the maw of a Shop-Vac hose that is zip-tied to the drill press.

"Everything that's not a turkey," Quarino says, "take it out." He fine-tunes the box call's walls with a straight knife, sands out the box channel, and then lightly rounds the rails. Almost done.

The paddle is affixed with a brass screw and a spring made of piano wire. He tunes the call with sandpaper, rounding the rails just a tad more. "You can make just about every turkey sound with a box call," he says, running through yelps, clucks, putts, purrs, and cackles, his head canted to the side to catch the subtleties of each note. He nods appreciatively. "They're all in there."

Now I have to learn how to get them out.

TEST RUN

Coaxing a love-starved yelp from a box call requires "just the right amount" of three ele-

Photograph by RALPH SMITH

ments, Quarino says: pressure, speed, and swing. First, don't stop the paddle stroke short. "Give the paddle a full swing," he instructs after I chop at the box call like I'm slicing potatoes. "And never lift the paddle off the call." The most critical aspect of the yelp, he says, is the rollover—when the note breaks in tone between the *YEE* and the *awk*. "You get the right rollover when you work the whole call in one motion."

Frustrated, I give it another try. "That's better," Quarino says. "But you're trying too hard." He takes the call from my hands, turns it nearly vertical, and with a single finger and gravity, teases out a hen yelp that is dripping with ardor. It reminds me of the time I watched Lefty Kreh cast 60 feet of fly line with just half a rod. A shotgun that swings well, a finely balanced ax—often it's a matter of getting out of the way and letting a fine tool do its job.

To putt, Quarino demonstrates, you wrap one hand around the call and use that thumb to hold the paddle against the rail, then pop the paddle gently with the fingers of the other hand. To purr, Quarino holds the call horizontal, and uses the heel of his right hand to edge the paddle ever so gently across the side of the box, lifting it sharply at the end. When I point out that I've seen other callers purr by holding the paddle between their thumb and forefinger, Quarino nods.

"I know, me too, and that's what I'm saying," he explains. "I can't do it like that, but a box call is such a personal thing. You have to find the ways that work for you."

On the drive home, the very call Quarino made rides in the passenger seat—a shiny new toy begging for attention. I pull over to the emergency lane twice to play with it. Back at home, I run the call over and over, and it's a little bit miraculous, really, that a piece of dead tree can produce one of the liveliest sounds in the woods. Still, I can't help wondering what a slight adjustment might do. It may be heresy to monkey with a custom call, but one thing's for sure: I don't know any better. So I turn the paddle screw counterclockwise maybe a quarter turn. That moves the meeting point of paddle and box maybe 1/32 inch. Or maybe I'm just imagining that. But it sounds a little different now. A little closer to a turkey, perhaps—like this hen's in the bar and wouldn't mind a little company.

I think of Quarino back in his shop, head cocked, listening to call after call, finding the turkey in the wood. I think he'd approve of my tinkering. I give it another series of yelps, and there she is.

It's my call now. FS

TIM CHRISTIE

TIP OF THE MONTH



DRY A WET HEN

If your call takes a soaking, moisture can raise the grain on the call's rails and paddle. After the call is thoroughly dry, examine it closely under a bright light to see where grain might have lifted. Take it down using fine 220- or 240-grit sandpaper and apply very light pressure. "You don't want to alter the shape of the radius," Quarino explains, "so just barely smooth out the burrs, and reapply chalk." —T.E.N.

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND ADVICE



• ***Beach Party***
Turkeys often strut on open stretches of lake or reservoir shorelines.

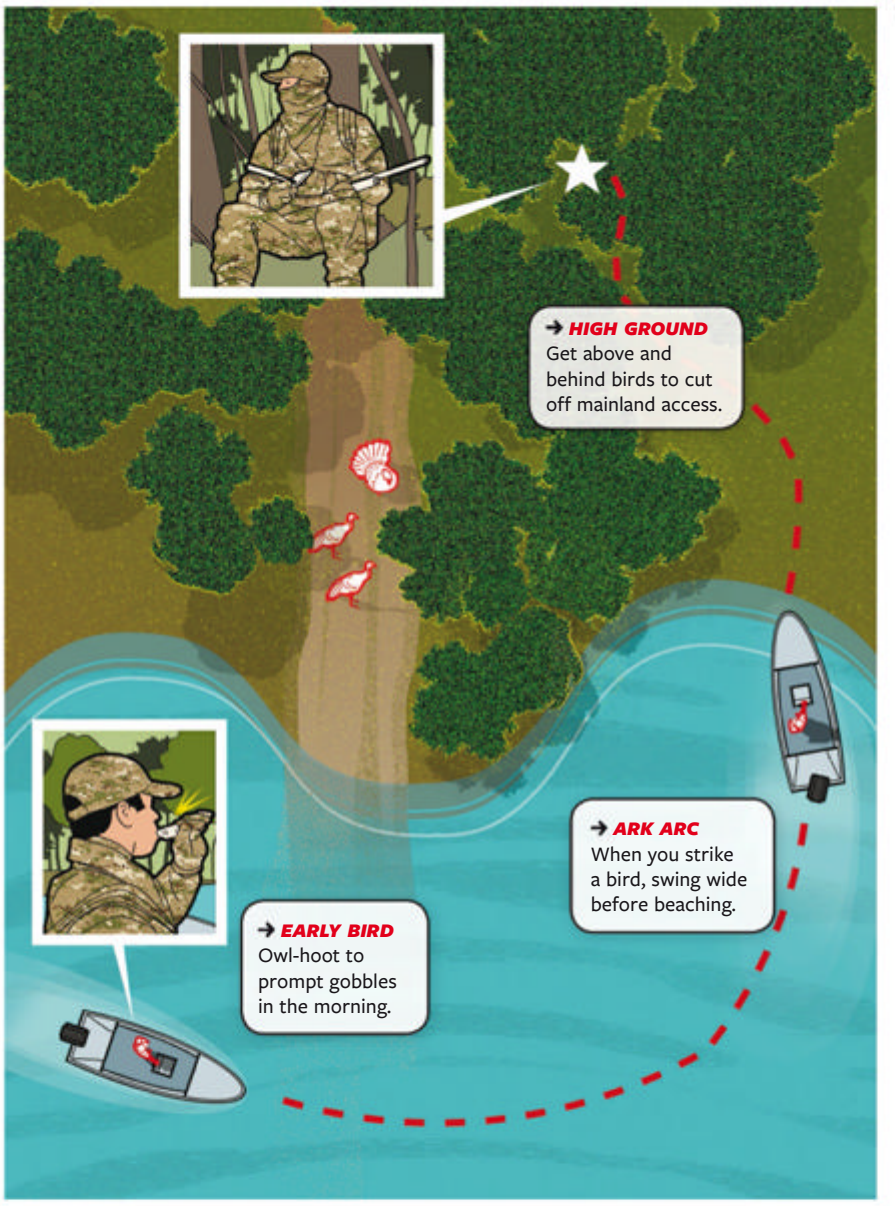
JOHN ERIKSSON/IMAGES ON THE WILDSIDE

SPORTSMAN'S NOTEBOOK

WAKE-BIRDING

Warm up the outboard, throw the lines, and start your public-land gobbler quest at the reservoir boat launch **By Phil Bourjaily**

The shorelines of America's reservoirs offer thousands of acres of public turkey woods, and the best way to hunt them is by boat. A water approach not only saves you legwork, but it can also help you get the drop on a giant gobbler. Here's the game plan from launch to taking the shot.



SHORE SHOT
Run dawn patrol, call often, and storm the beach

1 | GET A VIEW Study aerial photos of nearshore topography to locate potential strut zones, such as log landings, agricultural fields, and flats along wooded ridges. Some reservoirs have open areas where gravel roads were cut off when the reservoir was filled, and they also make great strutting areas. Be familiar with the public area's boundaries.

2 | WORK THE WATER Get on the water before dawn, and drift while owl hooting and listening during prime gobbling time. Later, from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M., cover as much water as you can, trying to strike a bird. Nose into coves and blow a crow call, then yelp and cutt to prompt a gobble. Look for turkeys, too. They often strut along bare shorelines.

3 | PREPARE FOR LANDING When you strike a bird, motor into a cove, beach the boat quietly, and climb above and behind the turkey to cut him off from the mainland. Call and be patient. If you see birds traveling along the shore, get ahead of them around a bend, and beach the boat. Loop back, set up in the timber, and call, or just wait in ambush.

LIQUID ASSETS
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QUAKER BOY ROAD WARRIOR
At 17 inches long, this box call is almost too big to carry in the woods, but it's perfect to keep on the console. That's because it's loud, broadcasting long distances to pry gobbles out of faraway reservoir toms. $70; quakerboy.com



MUCK EDGEWATER HI
Rubber boots are a necessity for hunting by boat. This Muck Boot's neoprene upper makes it much lighter than an all-rubber boot, and it wears extremely well. $120; muck bootcompany.com

CLIFF GARDINER & JOHN KELLER (BOX CALL)

Illustration by **JASON SCHNEIDER**

GEAR SMARTS

CUT TO SCALE

LOOK FOR THESE KEY FEATURES WHEN PICKING YOUR NEXT FILLET KNIFE > By M.D. Johnson

Minnesota guide Tom Neustrom has filleted thousands of fresh- and saltwater fish in his 36-year career. He carefully considers handle design, blade length, and blade flex to select the perfect cutter for a given species. Follow his advice, and you'll never hack up a walleye or crappie again.

Easy on the Juice
A traditional knife gives you a better feel for bone structure and how shallow or deep to cut. Once you can achieve perfect fillets by hand, you can graduate to an electric knife.

INCH TO THE EDGE

FISH LENGTH	BLADE LENGTH
5" to 10"	6"
10" to 15"	7½"
15" to 25"	9"
25" to 40"	10½"
40"+	12"+

BEND TO THE BONE

Nothing is more important than how a blade flexes, says Neustrom. Flex allows you to work along backbones and over ribs without unintentionally cutting either. Most of the work, he says, is done with the blade's wider half, so you typically want a knife with 15 to 20 percent flex (bend) close to the handle. The tip should flex well, too, because it's used for the more delicate skinning.

GRAB HOLD (SAFELY)

A wood handle looks great, but a composite or rubberized handle provides a surer grip with wet, slippery hands. What Neustrom cares about even more is the handle's shape. A notch for your index finger or a guard on the hilt at the base of the blade helps ensure your hand doesn't slip up toward the blade. These features also improve knife control, so you'll make fewer mistakes.

RAPALA (KNIFE)



TIP OF THE (SNAP) CAP

Use dummy rounds for more than dry-firing

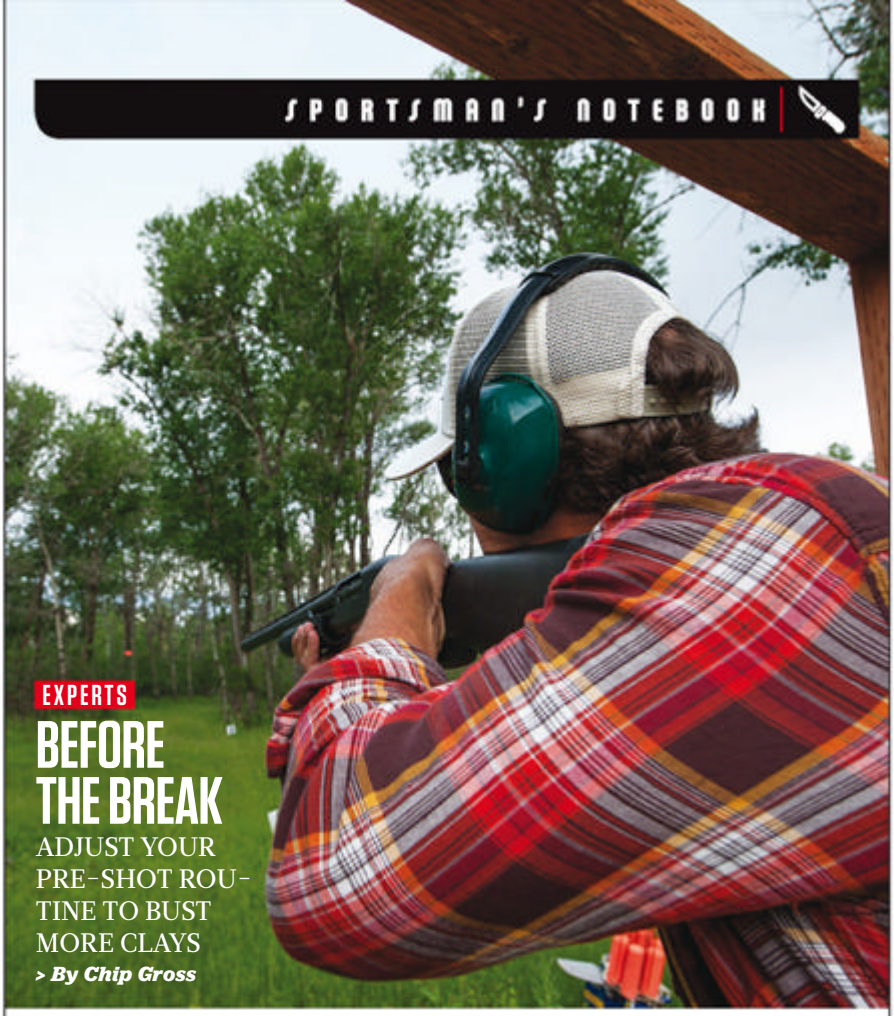
1 | ***Loading Curve*** For new shooters, the mechanics of loading a firearm and working the action can be daunting. Use snap caps to work through the steps before fumbling with live rounds in the field.

2 | ***Flinch Test*** When target shooting, have a buddy load one snap cap into the magazine with your live ammo. When the firing pin falls on the dummy round, you'll know immediately just how badly you flinch.

3 | ***Action Check*** If you're thinking about purchasing a used long gun, work snap caps through the action to make sure that they feed properly and the ejectors are in good shape.

—T. EDWARD NICKENS

Photographs by CLIFF GARDINER & JOHN KELLER



EXPERTS

BEFORE THE BREAK

ADJUST YOUR PRE-SHOT ROUTINE TO BUST MORE CLAYS

> By Chip Gross

If you simply walk up to a sporting clays station and call "pull," you're already one step behind. By employing a consistent, detailed routine that starts before a target ever flies, you'll bust more birds, whether it's in competition or at the ham shoot at your hunting club. Here's what to do.

1

Point Taken

Many shooters, especially those new to sporting clays, get confused about where to point the muzzle when calling for a target. The first thing you should do on the station is ask to see a trial target. At first, the clay appears as a blur, but your eyes quickly focus on the bird and it suddenly becomes clear. That focal transition point should be where you point the shotgun when you're calling for a target.

2

Mind Games

With your hold point set, take your cheek off the stock and turn your head and eyes halfway back to the trap. Call for another target to shoot. Find the bird with your eyes *before* beginning your gun swing. Concentrate on the leading edge of the target. Confidence is the key, so be determined to make the shot, not just take it. The latter tells your mind you might miss; the former suggests you'll connect.

3

Ten-Second Rule

Chris Wilkoski of the U.S.A. Junior National Shooting Team told me that if you look down for any reason on the firing line—say to load your shotgun—it will take at least 10 seconds for your eyes to fully refocus downrange. So learn to load your shotgun by feel, or if you do look down inadvertently, once you raise your head again, slowly count to 10 before calling for a target. That will give your eyes time to readjust.

BRIAN GROSSENBACHER

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FLY SHOP

MULTITASKING TIES

BUGS THAT PULL DOUBLE DUTY IN THE EARLY SEASON

> By Kirk Deeter

Guides hear it all the time: *If you could use just one fly, what would it be?* There is no single right answer, but in March and April you can cover a lot of water with bugs that have more than one kind of allure. These pre-runoff flies mimic more than one food source and trigger reaction bites, too. Three pros from the Rocky Mountain region tell us which double- and triple-threat patterns they bank on now.

THE WRIGGLE RIG

"At this time of year, the one fly I never leave home without is a red wire worm, and I usually fish it with a Pheasant Tail dropper," says Tim Linehan, owner of Linehan Outfitting (fishmontana.com) in Troy, Mont., who fishes big water like the Kootenai, as well as small streams. "It's heavy, so it gets the dropper down fast and is as much a part of the rig as it is a worm. It's an attractor, too. The fish love it right now."

THE HOT HEAD

Jeramie Prine of Dunoir Fishing Adventures (dunoirfishing.com) in Lander, Wyo., chooses a Firebead Soft Hackle Sowbug for Western tailwaters. "Because of the bright head, it doubles as an attractor or even an egg fly. Trout are at least going to look at it," he says. "At this time of year, we typically fish below the surface. When this pattern drifts near a fish in perfect sync with the current, it will get eaten."

THE MADE-YOU-LOOK MIDGE

For John Perizzolo (sweetwatersaddlery.com), a guide on the upper Colorado River, annelids are a reliable early-season draw for trout. "I throw a pattern I designed called a Pearl Zombie Midge," he says. "Midges are the main active insects on the river, and this looks like a midge emerger, but it also copies ¼-inch gray annelids out there. And because it's made with Krystal Flash and a black gunmetal glass bead, it's an attractor too."



DISCOUNTFLIES.COM (WIRE WORM); THEFLYSTOP.COM (SOWBUG); JOHN PERIZZOLO (PEARL ZOMBIE); ORVIS (HEMOSTATS)

Photograph by RALPH SMITH

TACTICS

SPOON A TROUT

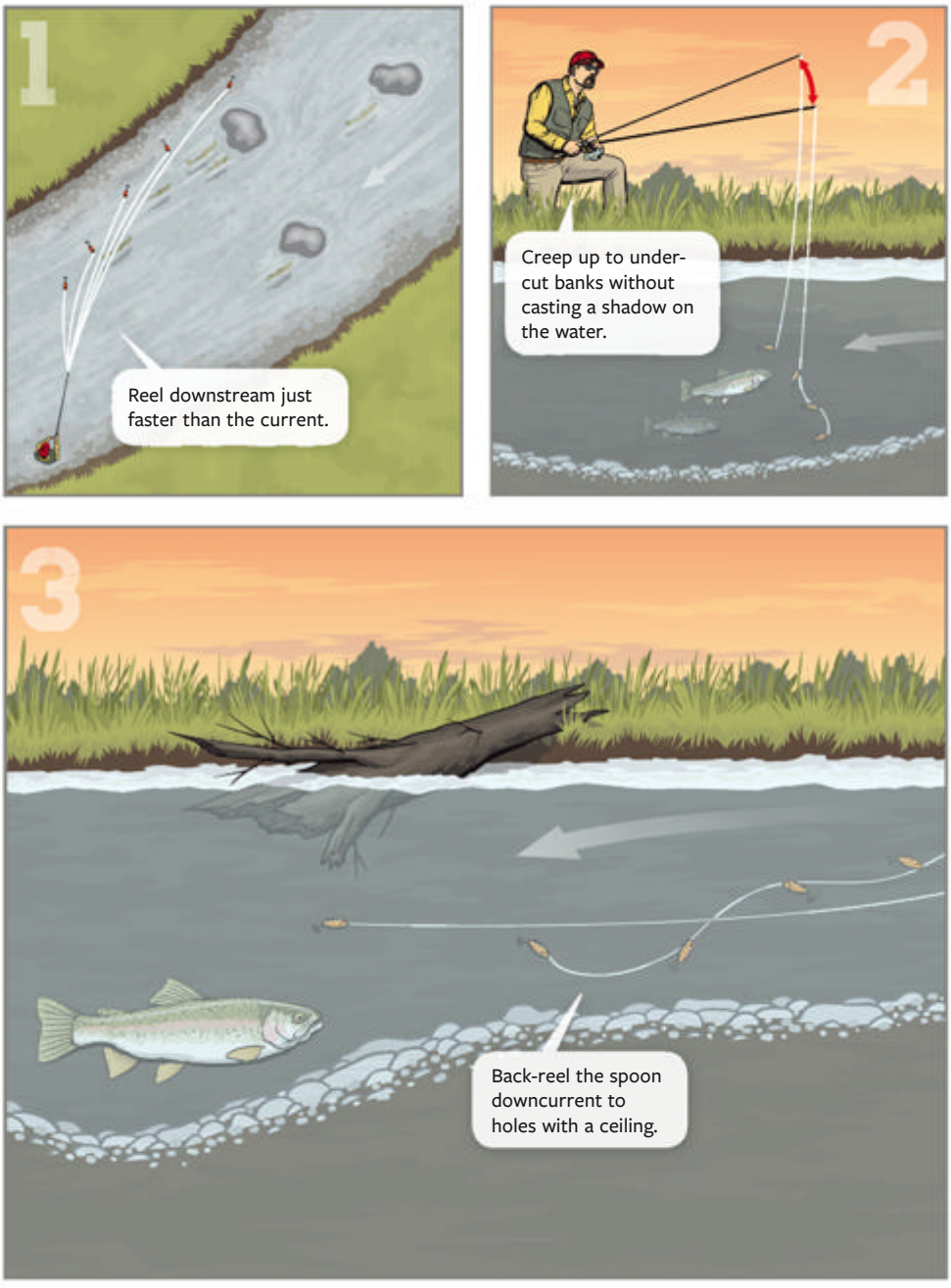
FIND THE SWEET SPOT, MOVE IN CLOSE, AND FINESSE A METAL SLAB TO SCORE MORE TROUT HOOKUPS > **By Will Ryan**

Like fins on a Chevy or a ball game broadcast over a scratchy transistor radio, trout fishing with spoons seems like something from a bygone era. Truth is, this method is as lethal now as it was in the old days. In April, chubs and shiners are spawning in streams across the country, and the biggest trout in the system are gobbling them up.

1 | FLUTTER EFFECT
Spoons shine in stretches where dead wood or boulders create mid-river hiding places. Cast quartering upstream and retrieve slightly faster than the flow. This will get the lure riding just above the bottom where the big fish hold. Pause the retrieve any time the spoon knocks off a rock or moves into a slack spot. The fluttering stop-and-go motion mimics an injured baitfish trying to right itself.

2 | MAKE THE CUT
Trophy brown trout love to tuck beneath undercut banks, and a spoon is perfect for pulling them out. Creep into position over the deepest part of the undercut pool, and vertically jig a spoon as close to the bank's edge as possible. Make sure you don't cast a shadow on the water. Big trout often slam the spoon on the drop, so you should have one hand ready to flip the bail closed as the lure falls.

3 | HANG TIME
If you can't get in a good position downstream of a hole, set up directly upstream of it, disengage your reel's anti-reverse, and back-reel the spoon into the current, letting it flutter down into the sweet spot. This is a deadly tactic if the hole has a ceiling, such as a logjam or root sweeper. Once the spoon reaches depth, keep your tip low and let the lure hang in the current for a minute before retrieving.





Get the Scoop Don't be fooled by modern holograms and titanium; classic spoons like the Dardevle, Little Cleo, Phoebe, and Thomas Buoyant (left) are my go-tos. I prefer predominantly silver finishes in clear water, and gold if there's some tannic stain. Quarter-ounce spoons are great in all water conditions, but if the stream's running high, don't be afraid to scale up in size, weight, or both. Likewise, drop down in low water or on streams small enough to hop across.

CLIFF GARDINER & JOHN KELLER (LURE)

Illustration by **ROBERT L. PRINCE**



Double Down Darts are effective, but tandem rigs catch more shad.

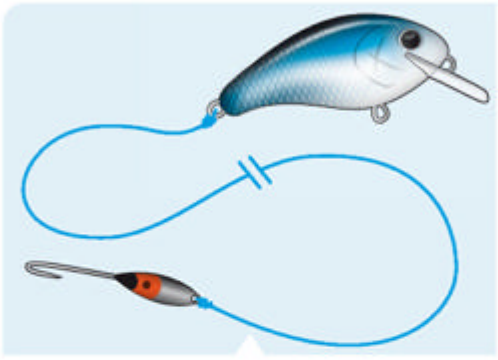
TIPS

SHAD HACKS

TAKE YOUR GAME TO THE NEXT LEVEL WITH A PAIR OF TANDEM RIGS

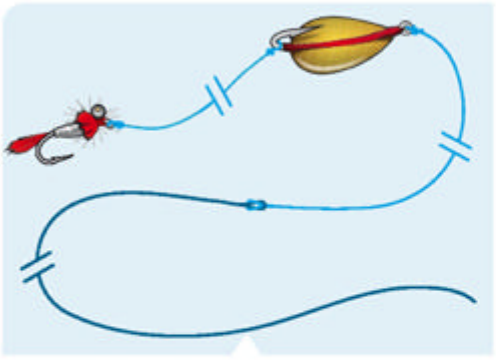
By Joe Cermele

Shad may be little more than catfish bait in some parts of the country, but on the East Coast, migrating American shad offer light-tackle and fly anglers serious spring sport. Flutter spoons and chenille shad bugs are go-to weapons for spin and fly anglers, respectively, but both produce even better when another lure takes the lead. So try these juiced-up rigs.



LIP SERVICE

Remove the hooks from a metallic-finish diving crankbait and tie a 25-inch piece of 8-pound fluorocarbon to the rear eye. Next, tie a flutter spoon to the tag end of the fluoro. The crankbait will take this rig farther than a single dart, and the lure will pull the flutter spoon down toward the bottom when it digs into the current. This is advantageous on sunny days when light-sensitive shad hug the riverbed. The crankbait acts as an attractor, and its wobble gives more life to the trailing spoon.



DEPTH CHARGING

To up the ante when flyfishing for shad, start by connecting a 24-inch heavy-grain sink tip to the end of your floating line. Attach a 7-foot 3X leader to the sink tip, and tie on an epoxy spoon fly. From the bend in the hook, run a 15- to 18-inch piece of leader, and tie on your favorite shad fly. The sink tip will get this double rig down quickly, and once your line starts to swing in the current, the spoon fly will ramp up visual appeal, while giving the rear fly a more erratic action.

HEAD HUNTING

Tricks for digging up arrowheads

Idaho native Dave Fountain has been tracking down primitive arrowheads for more than 40 years. Check your local regulations, and follow his tips for rookies.

Heave Ho Spring is the best time to look, says Fountain. "Farmers working the ground or the winter frost heave could bring arrowheads to the surface."

Go Native "Focus on ridgetops above major waterways"—common areas for tribes to camp—"and feeder creeks," he says. "Ridges running east to west are the most productive, but you'd have to ask the tribes why that is."

Scan for Contrast "Look for a straight line—the edge of a head—or a difference in color—gray, reddish, or black—that stands out against the soil. Find a lot of chips and flakes, and you'll find an arrowhead."

—M.D. Johnson



FROM TOP: BILL LINDNER; LON LAUBER

Illustrations by **PETE SUCHESKI**

SKILLS

WHITEWATER WADING

SIX KEYS TO FORDING WILD WATER DURING THE SPRING RUNOFF

By Nick Hays



Upright Citizens ▸ Don't go it alone; balance better with a buddy.

BRIAN GROSSENBACHER

Open Up

▸ Cross at the widest point; this area tends to be shallower and less turbulent.

Spot Snarls

▸ Keep an eye out for strainers—fallen trees or bushes that can entrap you beneath the water's surface—and never cross upstream of one. Crossing just downstream may grant you a brief reprieve from the current.

Mind Your Middle

▸ Determining depth can be difficult, so use a trekking pole or makeshift wading stick as a gauge and for support. If the water level nears your waist before you reach the center of the river, turn back and find an alternate route.

Prep Your Pack

▸ Before you cross, unbuckle your backpack, wear it on your front, and be ready to get rid of it before it can fill with water should you get dunked. I tie a long loop of lanyard to my pack so I can grab it if it drifts away from me, but it isn't attached to my body.

Do the Shuffle

▸ Point your hips upstream and shuffle-step sideways. Take small, manageable steps and make sure that one foot is solidly underneath you before picking up the other.

Arm Yourself

▸ If you're with a buddy, cross the river together. Link arms for better balance. If there are three of you, huddle up in a triangle with the heaviest man downstream, grasping one another's shoulders. The two men on the upstream side of the triangle should angle themselves so neither has the current directly at his back. When in doubt, choose an alternate path.

HAYS, A FORMER NAVY SEAL, SAYS: ***Three legs (yours and a wading stick) are better than two, four legs are better than three, and six legs practically make a chorus line, but you'll get across safely.***



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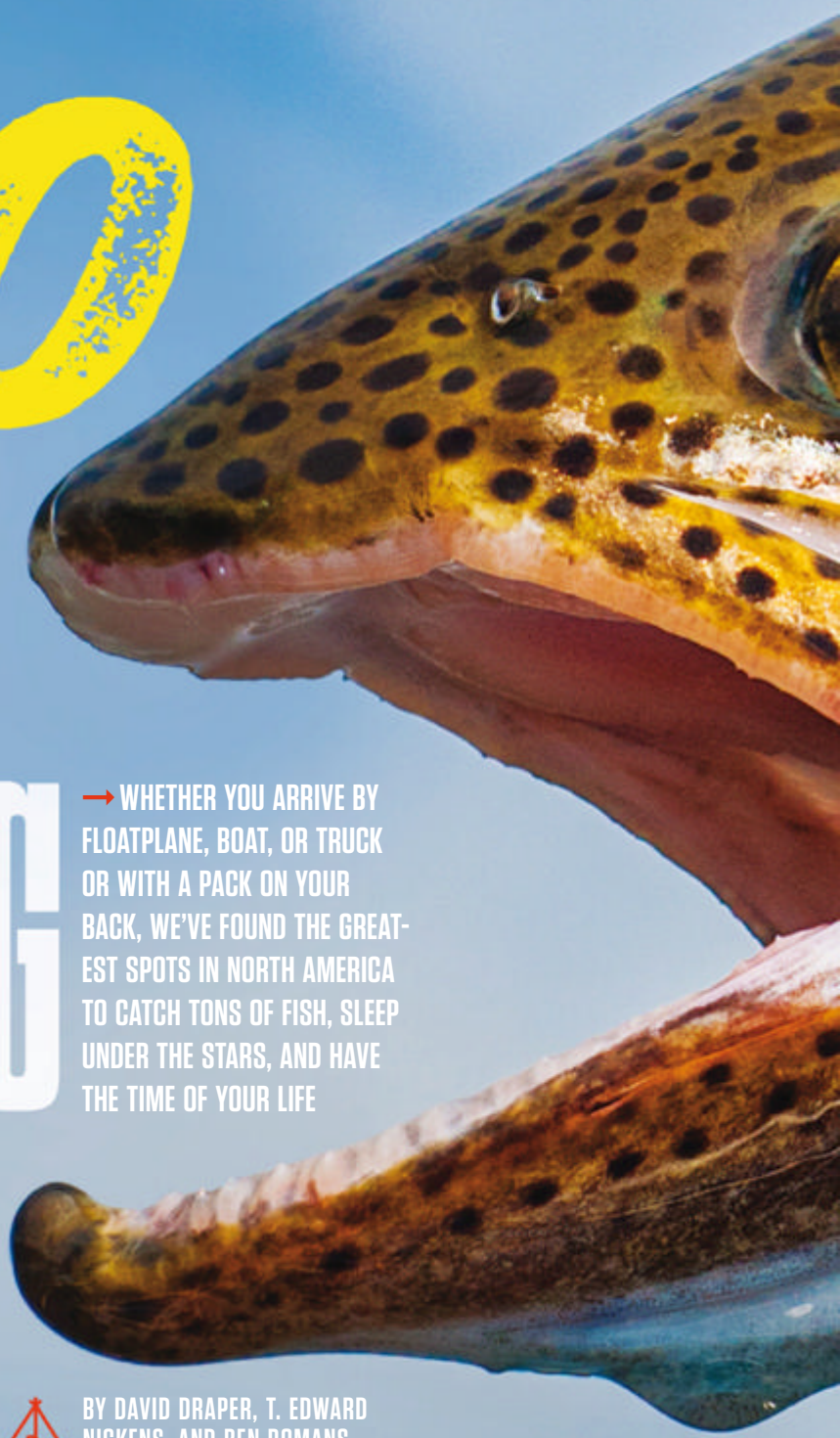
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BY DAVID DRAPER, T. EDWARD NICKENS, AND BEN ROMANS



Seeing Spots
A fat rainbow trout safely landed.

TRUCK CAMP
P. 44

FLY-IN CAMP
P. 46

BACKPACK CAMP
P. 48

BOAT CAMP
P. 50

2

FLY-IN CAMP



A SHORT RIDE on a small plane can take you to some of the quietest—and best—fishing camps in the world, where the closest neighbor could be a curious bear or calling loon, and the setting is gorgeous from every casting angle. One thing you won't encounter is fishing pressure. Fly-in anglers are often the only ones on the water, which means you're targeting fish that have seen very few, if any, lures or flies. Getting to the destinations listed here may be more expensive—and intensive—than a drive to the local lake, but in an increasingly noisy world, finding this kind of solitude is priceless. —D.D.

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ALASKA: FISH CREEK CABIN

■ This spot is one of Southeast Alaska's best D.I.Y. fishing camps for both fresh- and saltwater anglers. Fish up the creek for steelhead and Dolly Varden, or venture out into the Thorne Arm to target halibut, rockfish, and salmon.

ALASKA: ITALIO RIVER CABIN

■ This little Forest Service A-frame (visit recreation.gov for reservations) sits just 3/4 mile up from the mouth of the Middle Italio River—a prime location for a big run of silver salmon starting in mid September. You can book a flight with Yakutat Coastal Airlines (flyyca.com).

FISH LIKE A LOCAL

ALASKA: RAPIDS CAMP LODGE

■ Pat Stefanek has guided anglers on many of Alaska's major fisheries, but now he leads flyfishing trips to Rapids Camp Lodge (rapidscamplodge.com) on the NakNek River. He tries to time his visits for mid June, when predatory rainbow trout bust salmon smolt on the surface. "You watch for birds and bait on top, then cast a pencil popper or surface smolt pattern into the middle of it and hold on," says Stefanek. "It's like saltwater fishing, but for rainbows." Stefanek's go-to rod for these trout, which go into double digits, is a 9-foot 8-weight.

ALASKA: TIKCHIK NARROWS LODGE

■ Luxurious accommodations meet unparalleled variety in the Bristol Bay watershed at this wilderness lodge (tikchiklodge.com). Daily flights take you to the region's famed salmon and trout fisheries, including the Nushagak River, or you can cast for cohos and grayling from camp.

ALASKA: WULIK RIVER

■ In fall, this river north of the Arctic Circle fills with some of Alaska's largest sea-run char and holds trophy grayling as well. Pack a stout rod and bear spray because grizzlies aren't an uncommon sight here.

BAHAMAS: FLAMINGO CAY

■ Some of the world's best bonefishing is on Andros Island's west side, where this is one of the only lodges available (flamingocay.com). Don't forget to enjoy some conch fritters and a few cold bottles of Kalik.

BRITISH COLUMBIA: LOWER DEAN RIVER LODGE

■ Just 8 miles from the salt, this newly rebuilt lodge (lowerdean.com) offers access to fresh-from-the-sea steelhead from June to October. Later in summer, cohos and chinooks compete for your attention.

FLORIDA: DRY TORTUGAS NATIONAL PARK

■ Be sure to secure your landing permit, and campsite, ahead of time at this historic archipelago. There's great fishing from shore, or strap a kayak to your floatplane to tackle deeper water.

IDAHO: CABIN CREEK AIRSTRIP

■ Hire an air taxi to take you into one of the most remote and wildest places in the Lower 48—the Frank Church–River of No

TOSH BROWN (2)







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TIM ROMANO; BRIAN GROSSENBACHER; MATT GUYMON; VIC SCHENDEL; STEVEN BRUTGER

river and stringers of redbreast sunfish (a.k.a. redbellies). High winter water has pushed the Suwannee over its banks for the last few years, creating a smorgasbord for fish gorging before the spawn. Last year was the best season locals could remember, says Merel Pafford of Bowhunters Gun, Archery, Bait, and Tackle right outside of Old Town, Fla. "We had pound and pound-and-a-quarter redbellies in the store," Pafford says. "Can't imagine it won't be just as good this year." Crickets and mealworms work great, but last year Pafford brought in green worms that sent redbellies on a feeding tear. The best fishing is the three days before and after the full moon.

MAINE: WEST BRANCH OF THE PENOBSCOT

■ Target landlocked salmon on flies, in the monstrous North Woods of Maine, and set up base at the famed Chewonki Big Eddy Campground.

FISH LIKE A LOCAL

MISSOURI: OZARK STREAMS

■ The Ozarks pretty much have it all: pig browns in the tailraces, small-stream trout, muskies, ridiculously big bass. This summer, southern Missouri fly guide Brian Wise (flyfishingtheozarks.com) plans to work them all over with the Game Changer, a big, meaty articulated streamer. "It's the fishiest fly I've seen in a long time," he says. Wise will start stripping Game Changers for spring stripers and hybrids in the tribs of Norfork Lake, then chuck the bigger sizes for Ozark smallies and muskies. When early fall arrives, trout should fall prey. Plot your own Ozark trip in and around the Mark Twain National Forest.

MONTANA: MADISON RIVER

■ Stay at the Ruby Creek Recreation Area campground and work the Madison from Hebgen Reservoir to Ennis Lake.

NEW JERSEY & PENNSYLVANIA: DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

■ The Delaware River delivers famed fishing, and American shad, smallies, and muskies top the list. You can camp at Dingmans Campground at Dingmans Ferry, Pa., or at Worthington State Forest Campground outside Columbia, N.J.

NEW YORK: HITHER HILLS STATE PARK

■ A 2-mile sandy beach on Montauk gives you access to these famed striper waters.

NORTH CAROLINA: CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE

■ You and your 4x4 can be hauled by truck ferry across Core Sound to the Southern Outer Banks. Pitch a tent with the dunes at your back, build a fire below the high-tide line, and cast for redfish, bluefish, seatrout, and flounder.

NORTH CAROLINA: PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST

■ The Pisgah has developed and commercial campgrounds and roadside pullouts. The rainbow, brown, and native brook trout fishing is among the best in the East.

OKLAHOMA: LAKE OF THE ARBUCKLES

■ Not long ago, this 2,350-acre hog farm produced not one but two tournament entries of five largemouth bass totaling 40-plus pounds. There are private campgrounds aplenty, and public ones scattered through the Chickasaw National Recreation Area.

RHODE ISLAND: CHARLESTOWN BREACHWAY

■ What you see is what you get—water access to a striper-happy surf caster's nirvana. No tents—just parking spots for 75 RVs—but it's close enough to the water that you can lick salt from the air.

SOUTH CAROLINA: SANTEE-COOPER LAKES

■ The Santee-Cooper Lakes—Marion and Moultrie, with 450 miles of shoreline—hold crappies, stripers, largemouths, and cats.

TEXAS: LAKE FORK

■ More than half of the 50 largest bass caught in Texas were from Lake Fork. Camping is just an excuse to be on the water quicker.

TEXAS: PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

■ With five public campgrounds, you are only minutes—or mere steps—from some of the South's best surf and kayak fishing.

UTAH & WYOMING: FLAMING GORGE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

■ More than 700 campsites dot the region, anchored by the Flaming Gorge Reservoir with its possibilities of 40-pound lake trout.

VIRGINIA & NORTH CAROLINA: BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

■ This 469-mile scenic highway provides access to some of the best rainbow, brown, and brook trout waters in the southern Appalachians.

WISCONSIN: CHEQUAMEGON-NICOLET NATIONAL FOREST

■ Never heard of it? That's the good news. Here's more: 1,400 miles of trout streams, 607 lakes, and 400-plus spring ponds. Walleyes, trout, muskies, smallmouths. And it's all yours, Mr. John Q. Public.

WYOMING: GROS VENTRE CAMPGROUND, GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

■ Gros Ventre is a fine base camp for Snake River cutthroats, with more rivers to the south and Yellowstone to the north.

WYOMING: SODA BUTTE

■ Soda Butte Campground in Gallatin National Forest is the gateway to the less trampled northeastern side of Yellowstone Park. Hit Soda Butte Creek right on the roadside, then day-hike into some of the Gallatin's 700 high mountain lakes and reservoirs.



GET YOUR TRUCK UNSTUCK

→ At one point we were pulling down road signs and shoving the posts under the tires. Anything for traction. And thankfully, it worked. (It's O.K. The statute of limitations has long passed.) We were lost, stuck, and desperate to get out of the mud and back to the bass. That's the double-edged sword of camping from a truck. The temptation to roll until you can, literally, roll no more is too often too great. You convince yourself that you can make it beyond the mudhole to the lake cove on the other side... *Uh-oh. Now you've done it.* So I've modified my survival gear list for a truck camp. Repeat after me: Food. Water. Shelter. And a 3-ton come-along. If you want to get back to camp, don't leave camp without it. —T.E.N.

Illustrations by Daniel Zalkus

2

FLY-IN CAMP



A SHORT RIDE on a small plane can take you to some of the quietest—and best—fishing camps in the world, where the closest neighbor could be a curious bear or calling loon, and the setting is gorgeous from every casting angle. One thing you won't encounter is fishing pressure. Fly-in anglers are often the only ones on the water, which means you're targeting fish that have seen very few, if any, lures or flies. Getting to the destinations listed here may be more expensive—and intensive—than a drive to the local lake, but in an increasingly noisy world, finding this kind of solitude is priceless. —D.D.

"DAILY FLIGHTS TAKE YOU TO THE REGION'S FAMED SALMON AND TROUT FISHERIES.



ALASKA: FISH CREEK CABIN

■ This spot is one of Southeast Alaska's best D.I.Y. fishing camps for both fresh- and saltwater anglers. Fish up the creek for steelhead and Dolly Varden, or venture out into the Thorne Arm to target halibut, rockfish, and salmon.

ALASKA: ITALIO RIVER CABIN

■ This little Forest Service A-frame (visit recreation.gov for reservations) sits just 3/4 mile up from the mouth of the Middle Italio River—a prime location for a big run of silver salmon starting in mid September. You can book a flight with Yakutat Coastal Airlines (flyyca.com).

FISH LIKE A LOCAL

ALASKA: RAPIDS CAMP LODGE

■ Pat Stefanek has guided anglers on many of Alaska's major fisheries, but now he leads flyfishing trips to Rapids Camp Lodge (rapidscamplodge.com) on the NakNek River. He tries to time his visits for mid June, when predatory rainbow trout bust salmon smolt on the surface. "You watch for birds and bait on top, then cast a pencil popper or surface smolt pattern into the middle of it and hold on," says Stefanek. "It's like saltwater fishing, but for rainbows." Stefanek's go-to rod for these trout, which go into double digits, is a 9-foot 8-weight.

ALASKA: TIKCHIK NARROWS LODGE

■ Luxurious accommodations meet unparalleled variety in the Bristol Bay watershed at this wilderness lodge (tikchiklodge.com). Daily flights take you to the region's famed salmon and trout fisheries, including the Nushagak River, or you can cast for cohos and grayling from camp.

ALASKA: WULIK RIVER

■ In fall, this river north of the Arctic Circle fills with some of Alaska's largest sea-run char and holds trophy grayling as well. Pack a stout rod and bear spray because grizzlies aren't an uncommon sight here.

BAHAMAS: FLAMINGO CAY

■ Some of the world's best bonefishing is on Andros Island's west side, where this is one of the only lodges available (flamingocay.com). Don't forget to enjoy some conch fritters and a few cold bottles of Kalik.

BRITISH COLUMBIA: LOWER DEAN RIVER LODGE

■ Just 8 miles from the salt, this newly rebuilt lodge (lowerdean.com) offers access to fresh-from-the-sea steelhead from June to October. Later in summer, cohos and chinooks compete for your attention.

FLORIDA: DRY TORTUGAS NATIONAL PARK

■ Be sure to secure your landing permit, and campsite, ahead of time at this historic archipelago. There's great fishing from shore, or strap a kayak to your floatplane to tackle deeper water.

IDAHO: CABIN CREEK AIRSTRIP

■ Hire an air taxi to take you into one of the most remote and wildest places in the Lower 48—the Frank Church–River of No

TOSH BROWN (2)



Winging It Splash landing; a salmon comes to net in Alaska; unloading gear; a pike before release.

BRIAN GROSSENBACHER (2)

Return Wilderness, to fish for cutthroat trout in Big Creek.

MANITOBA: NORTH SEAL RIVER

■ Explore Egenolf Lake from the lodge at the mouth of the river or fly out to one of 26 different lakes managed by the Gangler family (ganglers.com) to land a Canadian Grand Slam: lake trout, northern pike, walleye, and grayling.

MANITOBA: NUELTIN LAKE

■ Fly from Nueltin Lake Lodge (www.nueltin.com) to one of the 715-square-mile lake's many inlets, where trophy grayling await.

MANITOBA: WHISKEY JACK LAKE

■ At Jackson's Lodge and Outposts (jacksonslodge.com), you'll have all you need: a small cabin, a long dock, and a pair of 14-foot boats at your disposal to fish Whiskey Jack and Hallen Lakes, both of which hold the day's essential shore-lunch ingredient—fresh walleye.

MICHIGAN: ISLE ROYALE NATIONAL PARK

■ Ninety-nine percent of this Lake Superior archipelago, which you can reach only by floatplane or ferry, is



designated wilderness, with 165 miles of foot trails that access both Superior and inland lakes. Cast for brookies, lake trout, and northern pike on waters as wide open as 7-mile-long Siskiwit Lake to tiny beaver ponds and streams.

MISSISSIPPI: GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE

■ Speckled trout and bull redfish run bait into the shallows of these barrier islands that are just a 15-minute ride by seaplane from the mainland.

MONTANA: GREAT BEAR WILDERNESS

■ A small airstrip at Schafer Meadows is your starting point for a float trip down the Flathead River targeting native Westslope cutthroat trout. To book your getaway, contact Glacier Raft Co. (glacierraftco.com).

MONTANA: RUSSIAN FLAT

■ This former grassland turned grass airstrip in Lewis and Clark National Forest provides access to brookies, browns, and rainbows in the South Fork of the Judith River. Camp in the corral or take a hike to the developed campground above Russian Creek.

NEWFOUNDLAND: LITTLE MINIPI RIVER

■ The entire Minipi system is well known for its big brook trout, but this remote watershed is the perfect place to map out a solitary river outing from your rustic outpost at Minipi Lodges (minipi.com).

FISH LIKE A LOCAL

NORTHWEST TERRITORY: AYLMER LAKE

■ With just a short eight-week season and no commercial netting, Aylmer Lake Lodge (aylmerlakelodge.com) seems destined to give up the next world-record lake trout. To up your odds, lodge owner Kevin McNeil says to go big and go slow. "We target trophies with big plugs like the T-60 Flatfish in chartreuse or white," says McNeil. "We search for larger fish hanging on submerged reefs in 5 to 15 feet of water and troll wide, slow S-turns over them until they strike. That fish may not have seen another lure in its entire life."

NUNAVUT: EKALUK RIVER

■ For a short window in late August, more than 80,000 bright Arctic char enter the Ekaluk River. B&J Flyfishing Adventures (arcticflyfishing.com), a remote outpost 300 miles into the Arctic, serves as base camp for anglers chasing a record.

ONTARIO: QUETICO PARK

■ The first leg of this multiday adventure is a flight to Clay Lake (canoetrip.com). From there you'll paddle and portage as you fish your way back to base camp via several lakes and rivers filled with big walleyes, bass, and pike.

ONTARIO: WABAKIMI LAKE

■ Deep inside Wabakimi Provincial Park, its namesake lake is 20 miles long with enough shoreline and submerged reefs to keep anglers busy chasing walleyes and trophy pike. Northern Wilderness Outfitters (northernwilderness.net) can set you up with flights, lodging, and guides.

QUEBEC: PILODEAU RIVER

■ A spartan camp on Lake Guenyveau (ungava-adventures.com) is your base for exploring this waterway. In late summer, anglers can intercept big sea-run char coming upriver to spawn.

TURKS AND CAICOS: SALT CAY

■ Ditch the Caribbean crowds at this remote outpost. A short drive from the runway, you'll find untouched beaches and plenty of bonefish within casting range.

WASHINGTON: LAKE ISABEL

■ Accessible by seaplane, this subalpine lake in the Cascades has an abundance of big lake trout. Go for plugs or jigs in white or chrome to imitate the juvenile kokanee that lakers love.

WASHINGTON: SULLIVAN LAKE

■ While not exactly in the hinterlands, a Forest Service campground and a 1,200-acre lake filled with kokanee salmon and burbot make this well worth the hop from SeaTac, Wash.

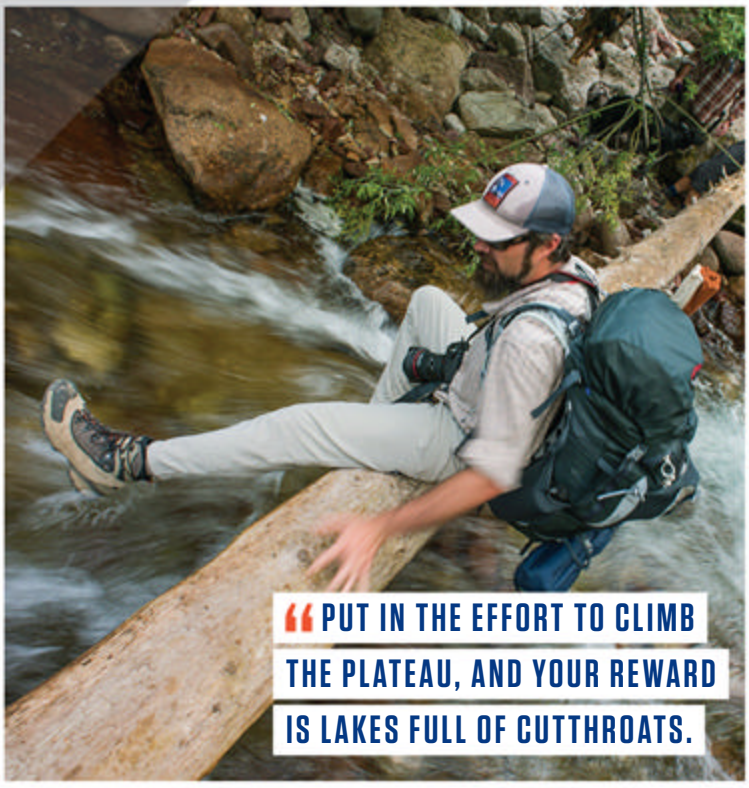


DON'T SKIMP ON GREASE

→ Although weight is a big consideration when you're flying in groceries (along with all of your fishing gear and tackle), do not pack light when it comes to shore-lunch ingredients—and pay particular attention to the liquid medium required for cooking fish streamside. The best fish fry I've ever had started with a gallon of canola oil, followed by 2 pounds of lard, and then a pound of bacon in a giant cast-iron skillet. When the bacon turned crisp, the oil was hot enough to quickly fry the fresh-caught walleye fillets to golden perfection. And if I were you, I wouldn't mention this during your next visit to the cardiologist. —D.D.

3

BACKPACK CAMP



"PUT IN THE EFFORT TO CLIMB THE PLATEAU, AND YOUR REWARD IS LAKES FULL OF CUTTHROATS.







NO PAIN, no gain—or, in this case, no panoramic vistas of alpine lakes, no streamside campfires, no rolling out of the sleeping bag and casting for a breakfast trout 20 feet away. That's the accepted calculus of backpacking into wild fish country—pay your dues, and the payoff is solitude, serenity, and the best fishing in America. It's a sweet deal, and here's the best part: Fishing camps like this are not all in the West, and they're not all about trout. Here's a wish list of the best backcountry fishing spots across the country, from mountains to deserts to bogs to salt marsh. It's all public land. Hit the treadmill, then get after it. —T.E.N.

ALASKA: GATES OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL PARK

Fishing for grayling, lake trout, and char can be beyond belief, but you have to work to get there. There are no established trails, but for wilderness junkies, this is the Big One.

ARKANSAS: BUFFALO RIVER

This Ozark gem is full of nice smallmouth and largemouth bass, with some of the best river-shore camping you'll find anywhere in the country.

COLORADO: FLAT TOPS WILDERNESS

Put in the effort to climb the plateau, and your reward is relatively flat tableland pocked with trouty lakes chock-full of cutthroats.

CALIFORNIA: JOHN MUIR TRAIL

This one's a whopper: a 210-mile trail that passes through Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks. It also crosses brook, brown, rainbow, and golden trout water.

FISH LIKE A LOCAL

COLORADO: ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Steve Schweitzer, author of *A Fly Fishing Guide to Rocky Mountain National Park* (flyfishingrmnp.com), suggests you show up to this iconic backcountry with beefy flies. His fly box holds caddis, bluewings, and other standards, but it is also stuffed with terrestrials. "When trout finally see ice-free water, they're going after ants and hoppers," he says. "Some alpine waters don't open up until well into summer, and by then, the big bugs are out." His go-to flies: Dave's Hopper, Amy's Ant, and the Flip-Flop Ant. With a 4-weight, Schweitzer uses a dapping technique with no more than two rod lengths of line, stalking streams and pond shores.

GEORGIA & TENNESSEE: COHUTTA–BIG FROG WILDERNESS

More than 40,000 remote Appalachian acres straddle the state

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TIM ROMANO; BRIAN GROSSENBACHER; TIM ROMANO (2)



We Got Your Back Crossing a backcountry bridge; nothing but net; hiking to a Colorado honey hole; prepping a fire at camp.



line, with a pair of trout rivers—the Conasauga and the Jacks.

GEORGIA: CUMBERLAND ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

Campsites on the island's north end are more remote and close to the best fishing—including a shot at a redfish dinner.

KENTUCKY & TENNESSEE: BIG SOUTH FORK NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

The river floodplain is open to camping, so hoof it to the bottom and cast for smallmouths, largemouths, catfish, and walleyes.

MAINE: BAXTER STATE PARK

Fishing for pond brookies is a staple of the Maine experience, and Baxter's 200,000 acres are stippled with backcountry waters.

MARYLAND & WEST VIRGINIA: CHESAPEAKE & OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Averse to altitude gain? Happy to whack a smorgasbord of trash fish (carp), trophy fish (bass), and exotic aliens (snakeheads)? Head East. The canal runs for 184 miles along the Potomac River, with campgrounds every 6 to 8 miles.

MICHIGAN: PORCUPINE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STATE PARK

The Porkies take in 60,000 acres of virgin timber, river gorges, and wide open lakeshore. Try the Big Carp or Little Carp Rivers for a killer brookie bite.

MONTANA: ABSAROKA-BEARTOOTH WILDERNESS

Nearly a million acres of wilderness sprawls just north of Yellowstone, with trail access to creeks and lakes that hold brook trout and cutts.

MONTANA: BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS

The Bob spans more than 1 million of the best acres in the West. Outfitters make it possible to mix up a trip: Horse-pack in, raft out, or walk it all.

NEW YORK: ADIRONDACK PARK

If you have the quads for it, strap a float tube and waders to your pack and pond-hop in the Five Ponds and Pharaoh Lake wilderness areas.

NORTH CAROLINA: HAZEL CREEK

One of the most famous trout streams in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Hazel Creek tumbles through a valley studded with mossy boulders and carpeted with wildflowers.

FISH LIKE A LOCAL

NORTH CAROLINA: NANTAHALA NATIONAL FOREST

In Cherokee, Nantahala means "land of the noonday sun," a reference to the steep, deep valleys where miles of fine trout water flow under a dense rhododendron canopy. Matt Maness, who guides for Foscoe Fishing (foscoefishing.com) in North Carolina, uses a sweep-and-punch style of fly casting to thread a back cast into a targeted opening in the overhead stream canopy, then redirects the forward cast at an angle to put the fly on the water. First, Maness says, lay out a short roll cast. Look over your shoulder, find the clearing in the streamside vegetation, and firmly sweep the rod tip up and toward the opening. "You have to stop the rod tip sharply to get a tight back cast to loop into the opening," he says. When the line straightens out behind you, square your shoulders away from the back cast and toward your target. "Now make a simple forward cast."

OREGON: HELLS CANYON

Save a few thousand bucks on raft outfitter fees and hump it into Hells Canyon by foot for summertime trout and fall steelhead.

OREGON: WENAHA RIVER

Thirty miles of trail parallel the river, which drains a roadless swath of the Blue Mountains upstream of the Wenaha's confluence with the Grande Ronde. Fish for rainbow and bull trout in late spring and summer, then target steelhead in fall.

SOUTH CAROLINA & NORTH CAROLINA: JOCASSEE GORGES

Four mountain rivers spill into Lake Jocassee. It's rugged country, but the Foothills Trail accesses very good brown trout water in the Thompson and Whitewater Rivers.

UTAH: HIGH UINTAS WILDERNESS

Nearly a half million acres of Utah's highest peaks are scored with glacier-fed trout streams. Be sure to bring mosquito nets.

VIRGINIA: SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

You have to work to access headwater streams, and the cascading, waterfall-studded creeks of the Shenandoah are top-shelf. Don't wait till the dog days, though. The trout fishing slows in these small streams once the water warms.

WASHINGTON: OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

The park has 4,000 miles of streams, 602 lakes, and 70 miles of rugged shore. Much of it is severe country, which usually equals hungry, willing fish.

WEST VIRGINIA: CRANBERRY WILDERNESS

Once impacted by acidification, the Cranberry River is again a fine trout stream, thanks to the addition of limestone drums to buffer the water.

WYOMING: WIND RIVER RANGE

More than 300 alpine lakes in the Winds were seeded with trout in the 1930s, and today the self-sustaining populations attract hardcore backcountry anglers.

WYOMING: YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

The Bechler River area is far from the madding crowds in the park's southwestern Cascade Corner. It's also very clear, so bring your casting A game for these wild trout.



BREAKFAST OF FISHING-CAMP CHAMPS

→ Fish for dinner is a no-brainer in the backcountry, but fish for breakfast comes across as exotic. But there's a global tradition of a morning's meal of fish. Take kippers and eggs, or bagels and lox. If it's cool enough, I'll fry breakfast fish the night before, and store the fillets in a zip-seal bag. They make a great breakfast wrap, paired with scrambled eggs in a tortilla. But I'd rather start from scratch: Catch a sunrise fish, clean it, and pan-sauté in butter and Cajun spice. Serve with two eggs over medium, with the yolks pierced so the yellow drizzles over the fish—Mother Nature's hollandaise. I'll eat it out of the pan so there's little to clean. Except my chin. —T.E.N.

4 ★ BOAT CAMP



Launch Pad
A crew waits to hit Bristol Bay; floating the John Day; exploring the Boundary Waters; landing a smallie.

"WITH 300 MILES OF SHORELINE, CAMPSITES, AND FISHING, THIS AREA HAS SOMETHING FOR ANY ANGLER.

I INHERITED my great-grandfather's johnboat almost 30 years after he died. He towed that thing to Canada every summer to fish, camp, and eat fresh, battered fillets fried in recycled Crisco. I never imagined the world the boat would open up. There's something about a fishing boat that awakens the inner explorer—that desire to drive around the next point because you know the fish *have* to be there. And if they aren't? Just move to the other side of the lake. Combine that freedom to cover lots of water with a comfortable base camp, and you've got the makings of an epic expedition. —B.R.



ALASKA: KANEKTOK RIVER

■ Charter-air services from either Bethel or Dillingham can deliver your crew and gear to the headwaters. From there, you float, camp, and fish for salmon, trout, and Dolly Varden through the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge until you reach the Bering Sea at Quinhagak.

ARKANSAS: WHITE RIVER

■ Bull Shoals State Park has tent and RV campsites, boat rentals, and access to one of the U.S.'s greatest tailwater fisheries for giant brown and rainbow trout.

CALIFORNIA: CLEAR LAKE

■ Anglers repeatedly rate this lake as one of the best largemouth fisheries in the West. There's a state park with a boat ramp just north of the town of Kelseyville, and two privately run campgrounds on the south and southeastern shorelines.

GEORGIA: LAKE LANIER

■ The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains nearly 500 campsites around the lake, all within a stone's throw of a boat ramp. It's one of the South's most popular lakes, thanks to the strong numbers of bass, crappies, bluegills, and more.

IDAHO: MIDDLE FORK SALMON RIVER

■ Apply and draw a USFS permit to launch, and you'll likely connect with more cutthroat trout than you can count along this 112-mile, camp-as-you-go float.

ILLINOIS: ILLINOIS RIVER

■ Jumping Asian carp are on most bowfishermen's bucket list, and this river is full of them. There are boat ramps and state park campgrounds north and south of Peoria.

TENNESSEE & KENTUCKY: LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES

■ With 170,000 acres of public land, 300 miles of undeveloped shoreline, boat ramps, campsites, and warm-water fishing in three different systems, this recreation area has something for any angler.

MAINE: ALLAGASH WILDERNESS WATERWAY

■ This 92-mile-long system of streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes offers good canoeing and fishing for brook trout. It gets buggy in summer, but there's good fishing and solitude at one of the many campsites along the way.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TIM ROMANO; BRIAN O'KEEFE (2); BEN ROMANS







MICHIGAN: BEAVER ISLAND

Surrounded by some of the best smallmouth and carp flyfishing action in the state, this island has two campgrounds: the St. James Township Campground and the Bill Wagner Memorial Campground.

MINNESOTA: BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE WILDERNESS

The more distance you travel (and portage) in this iconic spot, the fewer people you'll see and the better walleye, pike, and bass fishing and camping you'll find.

MINNESOTA: LAKE VERMILION

Vermilion is a structure fisherman's dream. Replete with islands, bays, and weedbeds, it's a favorite for walleyes, bass, and pike. Primitive, boat-in-only campsites are available through the state's DNR.

MONTANA: FORT PECK RESERVOIR

Here you'll find pike, lake trout, bass, and terrific walleye action. On the lake's south side, check out Hell Creek State Park. On the north side, there's the Fort Peck West Campground.

MONTANA: MISSOURI RIVER

One of the best tailwaters in the West, the Mo is easy to row in a drift boat or raft. Expect to share the water—no matter the season. There are campgrounds above and below Holter Dam.

MONTANA: SMITH RIVER

The Smith is one of Montana's best rivers for a multiday fishing and camping trip. (Note: The permit-application deadline is typically the second week of February.)

NEVADA: LAKE MEAD

Year after year, this lake garners more attention as a great largemouth and striped bass spot. There are public campgrounds, though anglers can also camp on the shoreline.

NEW YORK: ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

The Thousand Island region is a maze of islands, inlets, and coves with fishing for bass, pike, and muskies. Camp at Wellesley Island State Park.

OKLAHOMA & TEXAS: LAKE TEXOMA

Texoma has killer largemouth, smallmouth, and striped bass fishing. Texas's Eisenhower State Park has great camping and facilities.

ONTARIO: ALGONQUIN PROVINCIAL PARK

While lakers, smallies, and walleyes are abundant, this park is home to one of the last wild brook trout strongholds. The biggest fish are in the backcountry, reachable only by canoe.

FISH LIKE A LOCAL

ONTARIO: PIPESTONE LAKE

Pipestone Lake is a rare place that feels like a remote fly-in destination but is accessible by boat. There are perch, bass, and muskies, but most anglers come for the lake trout and walleyes.

"Late spring and early summer is a great time because the water is warming up," says Todd Baker, owner of Cedar Island Lodge (cedarislandlodge.com). "Baitfish are migrating to shallow water, and the big fish will be right behind them. We find lake trout and walleyes in less than 10 feet of water. Troll a chartreuse-and-white original Rapala through the bays that have a relatively consistent depth. Avoid the steep peninsula points where there's no structure and the water drops off. The water is colder, and there's nothing there to attract fish."

OREGON: JOHN DAY RIVER

The John Day is one of the West's finest and most remote smallmouth rivers. Boaters must obtain a BLM permit before launching, but the stretch from Clarno to Cottonwood Canyon Bridge is a good bet for solitude and good fishing. Get the *John Day Recreation Guide* from the BLM for information on campsites, as most of the river weaves between public and private land.

OREGON & WASHINGTON: GRANDE RONDE RIVER

The lower river runs through the arid, desolate canyons of eastern Oregon and Washington and is a smallmouth bass stronghold. Purchase the *Wallowa and Grande Ronde Rivers Boater's Guide* to find the best campsites.

SOUTH DAKOTA: MISSOURI RIVER

You'll find plenty of water, walleyes, white bass, and pike in the stretch between Pierre and the state's northern border. Public camping and boat ramps are plentiful along the eastern shoreline, too.

TEXAS: COLORADO RIVER

The lower Colorado River has strong numbers of bass (including the river-specific Guadalupe bass), gar, and carp. There are a few public riverside campgrounds between Austin and the Gulf, perfect for canoeists.

WISCONSIN: APOSTLE ISLANDS

Camping is allowed on 18 of this national park's 21 boat-accessible islands, though it's wise to reserve a site in advance. Once you're there, you can explore Lake Superior's big water for steelhead, lake trout, and bass.

FISH LIKE A LOCAL

WISCONSIN: ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY

The upper St. Croix River and the Namekagon River are part of the 225-mile system, with both primitive and maintained (first come, first served) campsites. They're also home to some of the state's best smallmouth and muskie flyfishing.

For fly anglers hoping to land a muskie, this is a great place to do it. Hayward Fly Fishing Co. (haywardflyfishingcompany.com) co-owner Larry Mann recommends that you bring a heavy rod, put less faith in pattern selection, and be ready for a workout. "Most anglers worry about fly patterns when it comes to chasing muskies," Mann says. "But it's really about stamina—can you cast all day long? Catching one simply takes time, and if you run out of gas, you're out of the game. Most anglers are used to throwing small dry flies on a 4- or 5-weight, which is not the same as throwing the family dog on a 10-weight.

"The rivers are part of the National Wild and Scenic program, so when a tree falls into the river, it stays there if it's not impeding navigation," Mann notes. "But that makes for some great fish-holding structure. Look for fish to be holding around undercuts, downed trees, around rocks and riffles, and all the places that you'd expect to find bass and muskies lurking in moving water." F&S

SWEET DEALS

→ Before most fishing-camp trips, I ask my wife or mom to whip up a tin of cookies (I'm a terrible cook), which I then secretly pack in my luggage. It only takes a few days in the wilderness before someone begins complaining about eating another freeze-dried meal. And that's when I reveal the sweet stash... and let the bidding wars begin. Cookies are a no-brainer, but I've earned immunity from rowing duty with a smuggled pouch of Big League Chew and exchanged a snack-size Butterfinger for the last brew. More recently, a ranger considered swapping an elk shed he found for a handful of sugar cookies. If I'd had milk, I'm sure that would've sealed the deal. Next time. —B.R.

FIELD & STREAM

BEST NEW LURES

NEED TO STOCK YOUR TACKLE BAG FOR THE SEASON? DON'T SKIP THESE FRESH KILLERS. THEY GET OUR VOTE FOR THE HOTTEST, MOST INNOVATIVE BAITS OF 2015

BY **JOE CERMELE** | PHOTOGRAPH BY **RALPH SMITH**



1 REBEL MICRO POP-R
Sling this tiny chugger on light spinning gear, or cast it on the fly rod. It's a panfish killer. $4

2 LIVETARGET TROUT FRY
Whether you want pickerel or big browns, this is a spot-on baby trout imitation. $14

3 PANTHER MARTIN FISHSEEUV VIBRANT IMAGE
A UV finish and flashy graphics make this lure lethal in low light. $4.50

4 MEGABASS BLADING X
Three line-tie holes let you change the pitch and vibration of this realistic blade bait. $8.50

5 MEGASTRIKE STRIKEBACK
A hinged head allows the hook to swing freely, ensuring fish get stuck from any angle. $9

6 YAMAMOTO FUNKA FROG
Its pearlescent hard belly and loud rattles draw out big bass. $8

7 LIVETARGET HYBRID SHRIMP
A hard body and soft-plastic legs make this shrimp extra lifelike. $13

8 VENOM LURES YURKO JIG
This small jig with sparse hair and legs shines for spooky bass in clear water. $5

9 MUSKY INNOVATIONS DYIN' DAWG
Like a dying sucker, this bait falls on its side, wiggling to life with the slightest twitch. $28

10 LUNKERHUNT COMBAT FROG
The extra-large air bladder lets this frog slide over nasty cover. $9

11 BOMBER LONG SHOT
A weight-transfer system helps this lure fly farther than its cousin, the classic Long A. $10

12 SAVAGE GEAR TPE 3D CRAB
The jig's design keeps this crab in an aggressive fighting posture. $5

13 SÉBILE ACTION FIRST BULL MINNOW
An external belly weight and a wide profile give this jerkbait a wide rolling wobble. $8

14 YUM SWURM
Oversize eyes amp up attack appeal for this sexy gliding finesse bait. $3.50 per pack

15 REBEL BLUEGILL CRANKBAIT
Barbless hooks and a lifelike finish make this a great choice for bed fishing. $6

16 LIVETARGET YEARLING CRANKBAIT
This crank mimics a whole school of baitfish swimming together. $16

17 JACKALL POMPADOUR
Wide metal wings and props make this one very loud topwater. $23

18 RIVER2SEA RUCKUS
Dual rattle chambers broadcast in high and low frequencies. $12.60

19 SAVAGE GEAR 3D LINE THRU PIKE
Big pike and muskies eat little pike, and this is a stellar match. $19

20 RAPALA SCATTER RAP JOINTED
A shovel-shaped lip gives this classic a seductive new wiggle. $10



21 Z-MAN FINESSE TRD
Measuring 2¾ inches, this mini stick crushes stream bass and big bluegills. $5.50 per pack

22 STRIKE KING TOUR GRADE RAGE BLADE SWIM JIG
A head molded directly to the blade helps reduce hangups. $5.60

23 LUCKY CRAFT KEROLL MAX
Designed for night bass fishing, this gurgling popper has a glow-stick slot on its back. $16

24 RAPALA BX WALKING MINNOW
This surface walker has a balsa wood core for extra toughness. $13

25 BERKLEY POWERBAIT FIGHT'N BUG
Big open claws mimic a crayfish in escape mode. $5 per pack FS

TAIL HIM!

NO SPRING TACTIC IS HOTTER, BOLDER, OR MORE HEART-POUNDING THAN FANNING (AND "REAPING") OPEN-COUNTRY GOBBLERS. NOTHING'S MORE CONTROVERSIAL, EITHER. HERE'S HOW TO TAIL A TOM—SAFELY

BY WILL BRANTLEY





MOST WESTERN NEBRASKA TURKEYS ARE HYBRIDS BUT ARE AS CAPABLE OF SONOFABITCHERY AS ANY EASTERN. THIS ONE ROOSTED IN A FENCE-ROW JUST BEYOND OUR TENT CAMP. EVERY MORNING, HE PITCHED ONTO THE PRAIRIE WITH HIS HENS AND STAYED THERE ALL DAY, HALF A MILE FROM ANY COVER SUITABLE FOR SITTING AND CALLING. HE WAS DRIVING US NUTS.

After two days of trying to ignore him, F&S deputy editor Dave Hurteau and I had to give it a shot. With no place to set up at dawn, we hung back from the roost and watched the Merriam's-Eastern tom flap down onto the broad sweep of shortgrass, followed by four hens. When they disappeared into a shallow draw 300 yards away, we took off—jogging the first 100 yards, crawling the next, and then belly-crawling. We'd almost made the lip of the draw when a hen's head popped over the rise ahead of us. I raised a dried fan from a tom I'd shot three weeks earlier in Tennessee, and made a few loud yelps. Then the gobbler crested, about 70 yards out, walking casually at first. I turned the fan with my wrist, making it glint in the sun, and he instantly blew up.

That was it. You could feel everything change—like the vibe in a bar when there's about to be a fight. Through a small gap in the Tennessee bird's fan, we watched the Nebraska tom close. He charged to 40 yards, then 30, and then stopped at 25 for a pirouette—his final warning. Hurteau's crossbow bolt dropped him stone-dead.

✖ PLAN WITH A FAN

Sneaking toward a gobbler behind a turkey fan is nothing new. But there's been an incredible surge of interest in fanning over the past few seasons. No turkey tactic is more controversial—or effective under the right conditions.

That's because some gobblers just refuse to come to a call. Henned-up field birds are probably the worst. You can burn a full day—half a season if you're not careful—on a tom that spends his days strutting in a cow pasture with his girls. Call till you're blue in the face. He's not coming. That's when fanning works best.

But before you reach for any tail feathers, etch this into your brain: Fanning is a tactic for open country only—prairies, pastures, cropfields, and the like. Fanning in the woods can get you killed. Period. You must be able to spot a gobbler from a distance. He needs some time to see your fan coming so he can get good and mad about it. And above all, you need to be absolutely certain that you won't be in shotgun range of any cover where another hunter could be hiding.

Fanning can work on just about any strutter in a field, but it's easiest with an aggressive one. "If I could pick the ideal bird, I'd want one stuck in full strut, with a big white head and three or four hens," says former competition caller Jeremy McCarty, who has been sneaking in on field birds all over the U.S. for the better part of 20 years. "A white head means he's content but probably willing to fight. That's a turkey you can kill."

Most gobblers will defend a 100-yard zone against a rival tom. If you can get inside that range unseen before showing the fan, your chances skyrocket. The key is terrain—a hill, dip, ridge, draw, or rise—that lets you crawl close. Then, from flat on your belly, you simply ease the fan into view. I like to combine my first showing with a few aggressive yelps or cutts on a mouth call. That can get a gobbler's attention and bring him right to you. More often, you'll need to ease forward, five or six belly-crawls at a time, slowly twisting the fan as you move. The gobbler will usually meet you, but if he doesn't, keep right on crawling until you can shoot.

Once Hurteau's bird dipped into the draw and we could hustle into position, he killed it in a matter of minutes. The evening before, we used a long strip of cedars to hide us as we circled around another flock feeding down the edge of a picked cornfield. When the cedars ran out, we belly-crawled through an open pasture to the crest of a slight rise just off the field—about 70 yards from the birds. When I showed them the fan, a half dozen jakes came charging in, and I put an arrow through the longbeard slowly bringing up the rear.



FAN OR DECOY?



FAN:
Lighter and easier to carry, a fan can't hide you as well as a decoy, so you must plan your final approach very carefully. Don't try crawling downhill with one; a gobbler will look right over the top of the fan and nail you.

DECOY:
The Mojo Scoot & Shoot (mojooutdoors.com) has a handle for carrying and flared wings. It provides far more concealment than a fan alone. But it's bulky and costs about $80, whereas a turkey fan is free. Still, if I know I'm hunting field birds, I make sure it's in the truck. —W.B.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: DUSAN SMETANA

✖ BE THE REAPER

McCarty started by crawling behind a fan but quickly decided that creeping behind a full-strut decoy works even better. He and his buddies began filming their hunts and dubbed the technique *turkey reaping*, which yielded the name of his company and website (turkeyreapers.com) and became common jargon among turkey hunters. In 2014, McCarty and wildlife artist Chancy Walters designed a strutter decoy specifically for the tactic, now sold as the Scoot & Shoot by Mojo Outdoors (see sidebar at left).

Reaping is just like fanning, but with a few nuances. "The decoy finishes birds better," McCarty says. While some toms will charge a fan, many will simply tolerate it as you try to crawl into range. A decoy, he says, usually brings toms running.

Also, you should show a decoy sooner. "Seeing it for the first time inside 60 yards can spook a tom. I typically start between 100 and 200 yards," he says. You can be more aggressive, too. "If I'm 100 yards out and a gobbler is coming, I keep going to him. That bold movement seems to really fire toms up. But once you're within 40 or 50 yards, you'd better get ready to shoot or he'll be climbing right into your lap." Footage of gobblers storming to within arm's reach of McCarty's decoy has fueled much of the buzz surrounding this tactic.

✖ TAIL GUNNING

If you're fanning, simply use the tail feathers to conceal the final movements of shouldering your shotgun. Often, you can slide the barrel through the feathers and take the shot. Otherwise, drop the fan when the bird is in full strut, and shoot when he cranes his neck for a better look.

A decoy makes shooting easier. You can stake it in the ground and then lean to one side to shoot prone, or ease up on a knee or onto your butt from behind the deke to shoulder your gun or draw a bow. Pluck a feather from the fan to make a shooting window. These shots always seem hurried, but you usually have more time than you think. If a bird gets edgy, give him a couple of contented clucks. And while he lingers for a second, deciding if he should stay or go, drop him.

> "ONCE YOU'RE WITHIN 40 OR 50 YARDS OF A TOM, **YOU'D BETTER GET READY TO SHOOT** OR HE'LL BE CLIMBING RIGHT INTO YOUR LAP."

IS THIS SAFE?

"Never stalk a turkey" has always been hunter-safety bedrock. But most accidents occur in the woods, and fanning and reaping are strictly open-terrain tactics. I couldn't find documentation of a single accident involving either method. Neither could the National Wild Turkey Federation. McCarty, who has fanned or reaped hundreds of birds, has never had even a close call with either tactic. Bottom line: All turkey hunting has an element of danger, including fanning and reaping. So be smart. Never do either in the woods. Make sure you can see your target bird and the surrounding terrain well beyond shotgun range in every direction. Never try either method during a spring rifle season (or in Pennsylvania or any other state where stalking is illegal). And don't assume you're safe because you're on private land. —W.B.

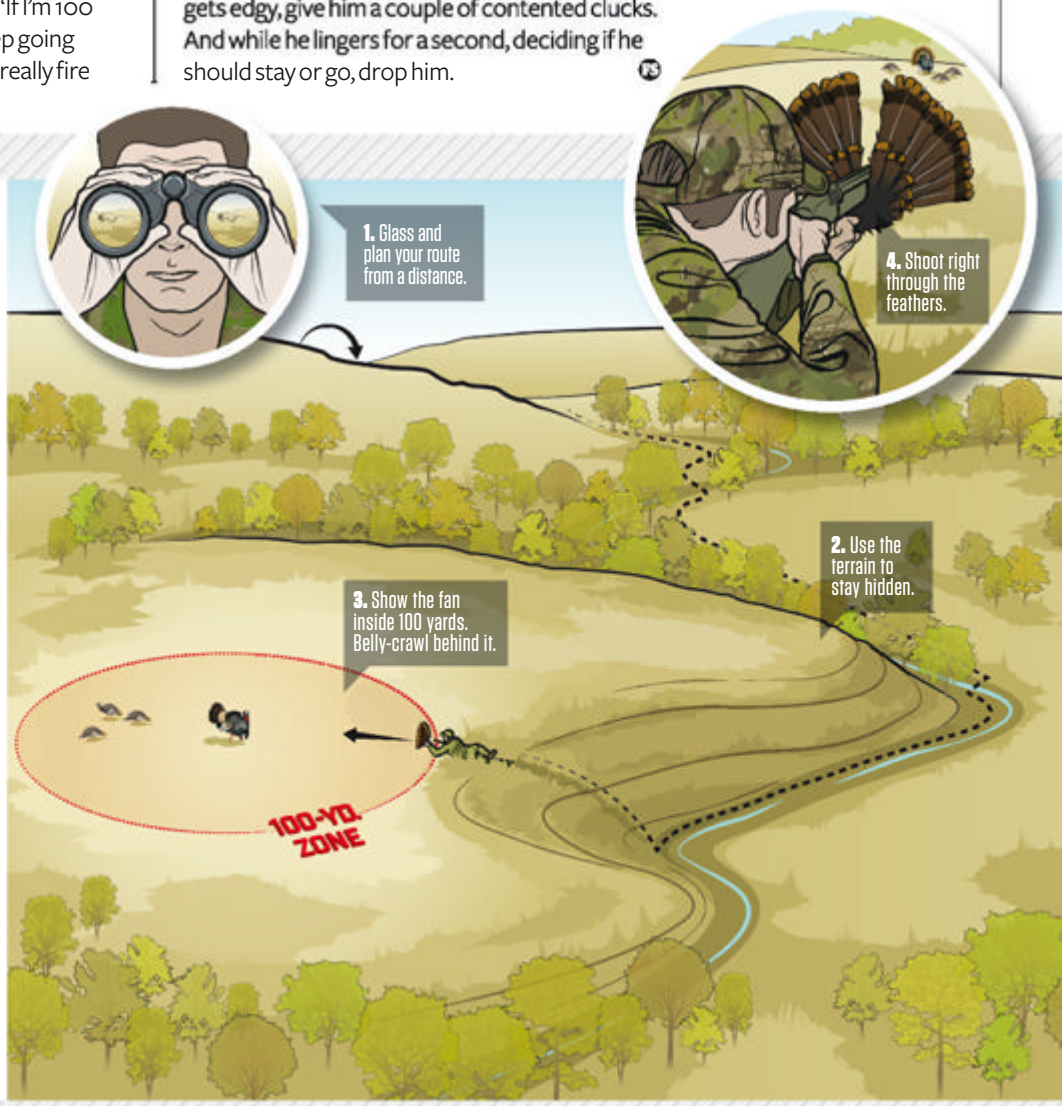


Illustration by **RYAN KIRBY**

THE ULTIMATE PIG RIG

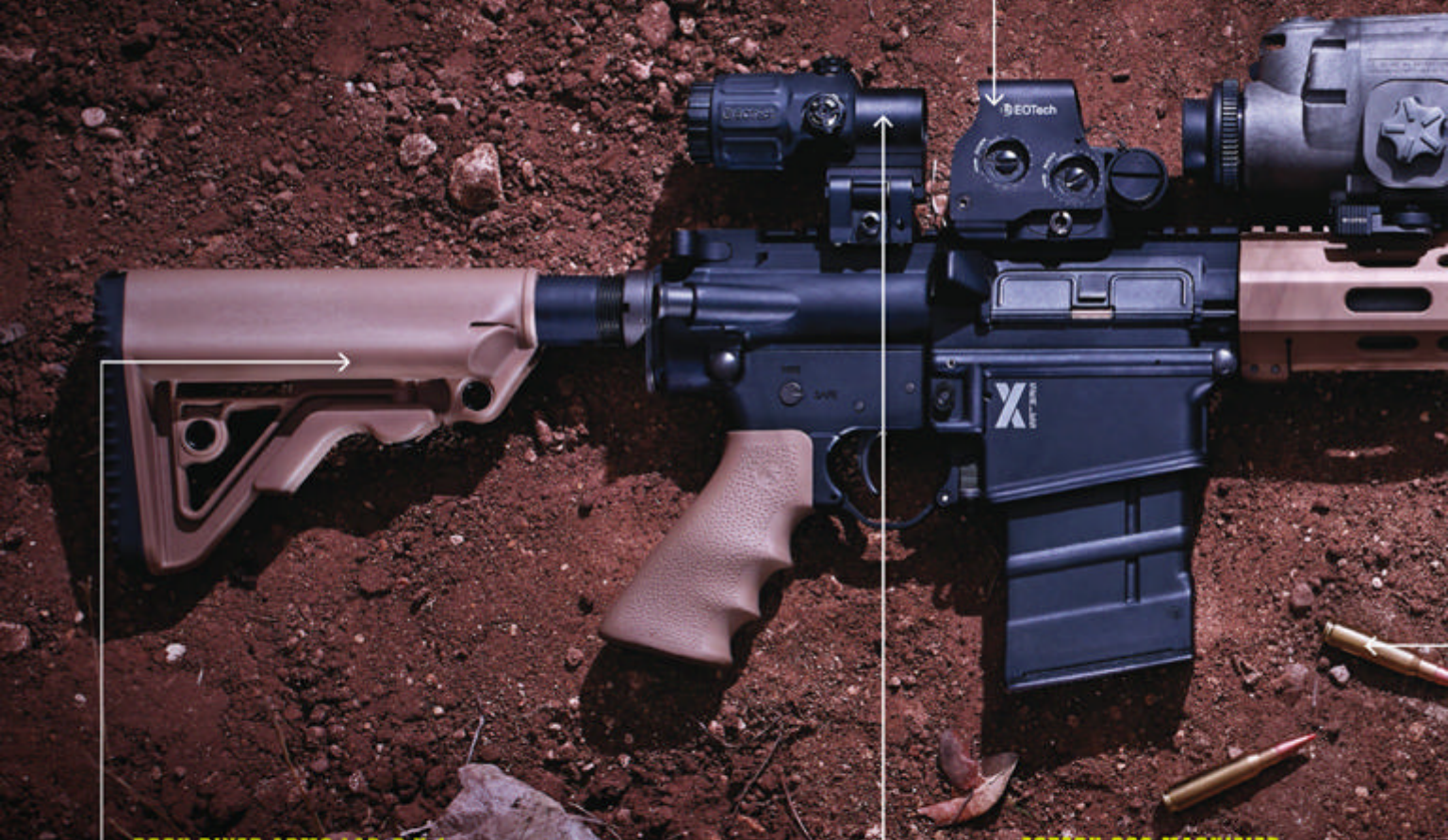
YOU CAN HUNT PIGS WITH ANY OLD BOLT ACTION. BUT TO EXTERMINATE THEM—DAY OR NIGHT—YOU WANT THIS HUMVEE OF HOG RIFLES. IT ISN'T CHEAP, BUT IT'S DAMNED DEADLY, NOT TO MENTION INSANELY COOL | *BY JEFF JOHNSTON*

No wild pig has ever been pleased to meet a deer rifle. As many a whitetail hunter has discovered soon after a pig plows into his food plot and starts sucking up all the beans, a .270 bolt action does the job neatly. But that's no reason not to build a dedicated hog slayer.

With feral pigs having eaten and bred themselves into the category of invasive non-game species in many states, wildlife officials tell us they shouldn't be hunted so much as exterminated. Managers are urging us to forgo some traditional hunting rules and use the most efficient means of hog killing available, all day and through the night.

More pork for us.

So, here's a warning to hunters and hogs: The outfit below isn't fair. It's more of a remedy—like rat poison, only more discretionary, a tad more expensive, and a thousand times more badass.



EOTECH EXPS2 HOLOGRAPHIC SIGHT

PRICE: $570
WEBSITE: EOTECHINC.COM

Many seasoned hog shooters prefer iron sights to scopes because sneaking up on pigs is rarely a problem with a favorable wind. (Their noses are usually buried in your beans.) But a holographic red-dot sight like this one has a huge advantage over irons: Its glowing-dot-and-circle reticle is ideal for night operations. The EXPS2's full field of view and zero magnification also make running shots easier. For the naysayers who bemoan batteries, one CR123A lasts for months.

ROCK RIVER ARMS LAR-8 X-1

PRICE: $1,805 IN TAN
WEBSITE: ROCKRIVERARMS.COM

The LAR-8 X-1 is an AR-10-style rifle that's chambered in .308 Win. and guaranteed to shoot sub-MOA groups. It comes with the best factory trigger in the business and has copious attachment points for devices to illuminate night-raiding swine. While the traditional deer hunter might call a rig weighing 9½ pounds naked (13 pounds as shown) too heavy for field carry, the determined hog culler considers it a small price to pay for the option of firing 20 rounds as fast as his finger can pull the trigger. (That, and where do you put the flashlight on a Winchester Model 94?) Excepting the AR-type safety, the X-1's forged receiver is ambidextrous, so lefties can change mags and slam the bolt home quickly. The buttstock is adjustable with a contoured cheekpiece that improves cheek weld for better long-range accuracy. And in .308 it'll smoke even the portliest of the pack.

EOTECH G33 MAGNIFIER

PRICE: $500
WEBSITE: EOTECHINC.COM

The EOTech holographic sight is even more lethal when used in conjunction with a 3X magnifier, like the G33. For close work, you can slide this optic off to the side via the ingenious flip mount. Then, for longer shots, or should you wish to spy the ticks crawling upon a hog's mud-caked hide, you can instantly flip the magnifier back in line with the scope and get back to work.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **ADAM VOORHES**

ROBIN FINLAY (PROP STYLING)



INSIGHT LIGHT WEAPON THERMAL SIGHT (LWTS)

PRICE: $13,600
WEBSITE: INSIGHTTECHNOLOGY.COM

Because feral swine prefer to conduct their nefarious dealings at night, some states have legalized night-vision and thermal optics, which make it much harder to be a hog. The LWTS turns all warm objects into bright-white silhouettes, even in total darkness. With it, I exterminated two boars recently as they conspired in tall grass 300 yards distant—an impossible shot with regular optics or even night vision. It's crazy expensive, but clipped onto the rifle's rail just ahead of regular optics, it extends shooting hours infinitely.

SILENCERCO HARVESTER 30

PRICE: $700 PLUS $200 BATF TAX STAMP
WEBSITE: SILENCERCO.COM

Now that suppressors are legal for hunting in 34 states, all hunters who can have one should—and perhaps would if the devices weren't still difficult to purchase thanks to their sinister Hollywood image. Silencerco's Harvester is an 8.8-inch, 11.3-ounce can that screws onto this rifle's existing threads after the muzzle brake is removed. It reduces the typical report of a .308 round from 170 decibels to 134, which is quieter than a .22 LR. So you'll frighten your beloved bucks (and annoy your neighbors) less now and save on hearing aids later.

LASER GENETICS ND3X50 SUBZERO

PRICE: $600
WEBSITE: LASERGENETICS.COM

On the off chance you can't afford thermal sights, go with this laser spotlight instead. Mounted so its dazzling beam matches your normal riflescope's field of view, it illuminates both target and reticle at ranges far surpassing night-vision units (up to 800 yards). It's also much simpler to use and less expensive than most decent night-vision devices. And its green laser beam doesn't spook animals like a traditional spotlight does.

HORNADY FULL BOAR AMMO

PRICE: $51 FOR 20
WEBSITE: HORNADY.COM

This round's monolithic, gilding-metal GMX bullet features a hollow point for quick frontal expansion and near-perfect weight retention because there is no core to separate. The round is accurate, proven to function in AR-style rifles, and available in common AR calibers like .223, 6.8 SPC, .308, and others, making it ideal for high-tech hogging.

HOW I FISH

Richard Stanczyk

SWORDFISHING INNOVATOR, MARINA OWNER, TARPON AND BONEFISH EXPERT, TEETOTALER IN MARGARITAVILLE BY MIKE TOTH



WHEN I WAS 10, my parents bought a home on a canal in Miami. I had a 9-foot pram with a little 3½-hp Evinrude motor. I used to put-put out of there into Biscayne Bay. By the time I was 15, I was taking a 21-foot boat with a single engine all the way to Bimini.

THE DAY OF the Christmas ball at my high school, my girlfriend begged me not to go fishing. She'd bought a special gown, and we were going to go to the Fontainebleau. But I went out that morning anyway and hooked a big blue marlin. I fought it into the night and ultimately broke it off.

I MISSED THE dance.

I FINALLY CAUGHT my first blue marlin off of the Bahamas when I was 21. It was a 500-pounder, and I had to partially swamp the boat to get it in.

WHEN I LEARNED my grandfather was on his deathbed, I went and told him I'd graduated the University of Miami with an accounting degree and was working as a CPA. The only way he could communicate was by writing on a blackboard. He wrote, "Why the hell do you want to do that?" It was a freeing experience.

IN 1969 I was fishing a tournament in Bimini. After battling a blue marlin for close to seven hours and losing it, I got inebriated and passed out on the dock. A fisherman named Harold Adler shook me awake, and we became friends. A year later an engine in Adler's boat blew, and he asked me to fill in for him in a sailfish tournament at Bud N' Mary's Fishing Marina in Islamorada. My boat won the tournament and I fell in love with the Florida Keys. I started keeping my boat at Bud N' Mary's, and in June of 1978 I bought it.

JIMMY STEWART FISHED out of Bud N' Mary's. Paul Newman. Ted Williams. Several American presidents. We just had John Boehner here for the third or fourth time.

I BECAME OBSESSED with bonefish and fished a couple hundred days a year for them. No fish is more challenging to catch on a fly rod. I guided my friend Vic Gaspeny in 1985 to what was then the world bonefish record on a fly rod. It weighed 14 pounds 6 ounces.

WHEN I FIRST got to the Keys, bonefish were marlin bait.

IN 2003, GASPENY convinced me to try to catch a swordfish off of Islamorada. Swordfishing back then was a nighttime operation because the fish go deep during the day. Staying out all night and trying to run a business during the day wasn't working, so Vic suggested we try to catch one during the day. We had bricks and let out miles of heavy line. We were doing it all wrong—but when we brought it all in, a small swordfish was entangled in the line.

I WENT FROM fishing for tailing bonefish in 2 feet of water to chasing swordfish in 3,000 feet of water with specialized gear. Now, I've captured or been witness to the capture of about 700 swords.

WITHOUT CONSERVATION AND catch-and-release, we would not be having this conversation right now.

I STILL GO nighttime tarpon fishing. Being in a 16-foot boat with a 120-pound monster crashing your bait at sunset is one of the ultimates in fishing.

ONCE I FOUND four Cuban refugees on a raft made from inner tubes tied together 40 miles offshore. They'd been drifting for five days. I took them onto my boat but had to stand by until the Coast Guard arrived. We gave them water and food, and after several hours I saw a big school of dolphin had gathered around their raft. I put rods and reels in the refugees' hands, and we started bailing fish over the side.

One of the men had a cloth tied together with string. Inside were coins, a ring, and a crucifix. They were all his worldly possessions, and he gave them to me. I said no, but he insisted. And then he cried.

I'VE FOUND 30 or 40 rafts over the years. Some, far offshore, were empty. You know what that means.

PEOPLE COME DOWN here as a family and realize they can go out in an offshore or backcountry guide boat and fish among the clarity of the coral reefs, the beauty of the flats and mangroves, the wildness of the Everglades. You can't do that at Disney World.

I STARTED DRINKING when I was 14 or 15 and came to a bottom 24 years ago. I met myself and realized what I was doing. I love sobriety. I would have perished otherwise.

BETWEEN 45 AND 50 offshore, backcountry, and party-boat captains operate out of here. We get 200 to 250 fishermen a day. Helping all these people make a living for 37 years has been a real satisfaction for me.

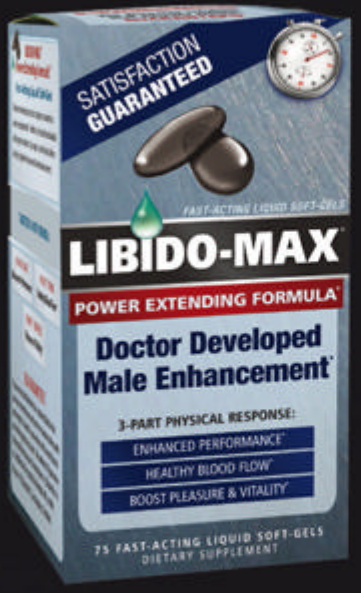
IT'S NOT LIKE running a funeral home. That's for sure.

Photograph by PETER FRANK EDWARDS



Looking for a Fight Stanczyk on board his *Catch-22* in the Gulf Stream.

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By Rick Bass

Photographs by Yasu + Junko

TWELVE DEER

As time crawls toward the next whitetail opener, the author reflects on his past season—the stalks, the shots, the drags out, and every other memorable stage in the pursuit of deer

SOMETIMES I THINK there are 12 different stages of being a deer. There's the deer of the imagination, in the weeks and even months before the hunt—the seasons. There's the deer you don't see—the deer of your desire—and thirdly, the deer you *do* see, and then decide whether to take—to attempt to take—or to let it go and search for another. Especially in the Texas Hill Country, where I hunt each year. The deer are not so large there as they are elsewhere, and truth be told as I age they become smaller, almost like air—as if you could fit them in an envelope, as if they existed more in your mind. It's their terrain, where you find them, that is so huge, in your mind, with 10,000 points of attachment. Orion, bright burning in the southern sky; the way camp smells when you come back in midmorning, and bacon's frying, and out of habit you change out of your camouflage and leave those clothes in the sun, even though you may no longer really care for killing anything, even though you may care really not to kill anything. (Well, maybe a turkey. Always, in spring, you find yourself reading new wild turkey recipes.)

Fourth, there are the deer your hunting camp talks about—almost anyone younger than you, brothers and cousins and nephews, they all still want deer.

Fifth, the deer that got away.

Sixth, the deer that are killed—by you or by another of your family.

Seventh, the way the deer looks in its last moment of life, unaware—so boldly, vitally alive, so unaware of the next-step of mortality—knowing only the physical senses of the world, which are or should be shared by us all. This brings up eventually the question of why we hunt, which is unanswerable, only maybe that it is in us, has always been in us—is still in some, not in others—and is what shaped and sculpted us as a species, and got us, for better and for worse, to where we are today.

Eighth, the deer in the first second after the shot, whether with bow or rifle—the leap, the collapse, and then the stillness, and your heart hammering—you are changed. And then, half an hour later (the sunlight different, *better;* the returning sounds of morning birds, or, conversely, the purple dulling and deepening of dusk), when you walk as quietly and respectfully as you can through the dry leaves (oak, hickory, hackberry, mesquite, ash) to where the mass of the animal is sleeping now, maybe not forever, but more about that later.

(I forgot something: Before standing up and walking toward where the deer has fallen, you might place the empty bullet casing, still bright and warm, against the trunk of the tree where you were sitting, or on top of, or beneath, a rock—not litter, but instead like a hidden cairn, a memorial to time's river rolling past—years later,



"EVEN IF YOU ARE NO LONGER BRIMMING WITH PASSION TO KILL ONE, THE ANIMAL'S PRESENCE STILL SENDS THE OLD ELECTRICAL CURRENT THROUGH YOU: RECHARGES THAT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND THE DEER AND THE WOODS.

you or yours might or might not be able to find it again, might be sitting beneath that same tree and look down and see the browned metal cartridge, amid the soil and brown leaves and squirrel-chewed hulls of nuts, the engraving on the base smoothed by the world's erosive appetite, *artifact*...)

There is the ninth deer, when you kneel beside the warmth of the animal and say "Thank you," and touch, and marvel at, the hardened antlers of the king.

The time you spend there is not insubstantial.

Deer No. 10, the drag out, or, if you're in the wayback, the pack out. The weight of your decision made manifest; the new responsibility. You're no longer the hunter. Now you're the gatherer, the provider. Your people are waiting.

This brings us to the 11th deer.

Deer No. 12, of course, is the last you'll ever see of the animal, and the last time the animal will still be the animal and not you, who are eating it. Twelve is the recipe, the meal, the thanksgiving, as you become the deer, ever-the-same, and yet ever-changing. But No. 11 is the last time the deer is in the world, really, as you peel the hide back and pull it from the chilling body, revealing the bounty, the miracle, silverskin and fascia separating red muscles, muscles your hands know well.

It is January as I write this, and what I am remembering this morning is last season, and the way a deer, a buck, can appear when you least expect it, and of how, even if you are no longer brimming with passion to kill one, the animal's presence still sends the old electrical current through you: recharges that relationship between you and the deer and the woods. I saw a nice buck and watched him—he was in full rut—and walked along behind him for a while, as he trotted ahead, but I did not shoot.

I'm remembering, too, the way that in autumn, I walk up the hill and search for just the right stones, each about the size of a walnut, hickory nut, or pecan—round—which I fold beneath the nape of skin before attaching the rope to the skin to help me peel the hide off, revealing the meat, the bounty, the sustenance. With the little Hill Country deer I hunt it makes the job easier. It's a trick my father showed me. The hide comes off evenly, cleanly, easily; and the older I get, the more powerful and significant the transition in that step seems to me, deer No. 11, where you get the hide off, and get down to the real business, as if for the first time, of becoming the deer.

The hunter, we all know, becomes his or her prey, and the prey, certainly, sculpts the hunter.

What dozen variations are there, for and within each of us, and where, in the circle, are any of us, on any day? It does not matter, in autumn. In autumn, we walk through the woods, watching and searching and scenting and listening, still touching the earth so firmly, anchored by all these tides of deer. FS



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SPECIAL BONUS SECTION

TURKEY Handbook



Cold Turkey
A Montana tom fans during an April snowfall.

DONALD M. JONES

Forecast and Blast

Three strategies for early-season gobblers, no matter the weather **By Scott Bestul**



Running Buddies
Montana gobblers catch some noonday sun.

Be it March, April, or May, the first few weeks of turkey season can range from shivering to short-sleeve weather, or anything in between. Because nothing has a bigger effect on spring turkey behavior than Mother Nature, it's vital to know how to score no matter what she serves up.

THE LONG WINTER

WEATHER PATTERN Persistent cold temperatures. Snow in the north. Sleet and rain farther south. Frigid northwest winds.
BIRD BEHAVIOR Turkeys will be flocked up, usually near a high-calorie food source, such as a grainfield or oak ridge. Expect birds to roost on slopes or in shelterbelts out of the wind.
YOUR PLAY Pattern the flock so you know where they roost and feed. At dawn, set up on a travel route between the roost and the closest food source. Coax the flock into range with aggressive yelping and multiple decoys. If things get really tough, bust the flock by running at them. Set up at the site of the scatter, then use assembly yelps and kee kees to bring them back in.

THE BIPOLAR EXPRESS

WEATHER PATTERN Unseasonably warm temperatures one day that plunge toward freezing the next. Wind speed and direction changing by the hour.
BIRD BEHAVIOR Breeding will begin in fits and starts. Mature gobblers will get most of the action, making for lots of fired-up 2-year-olds.
YOUR PLAY On nice days, set up on the bird that's gobbling the hardest on the limb and work him with aggressive hen yelping. When the action slows at midmorning, run-and-gun with a single hen decoy.

When the weather stinks, stake a blind at the best food source in the morning and call aggressively, as above. In the afternoon, move your blind close to the roost site with multiple decoys nearby.

THE EARLY SUMMER

WEATHER PATTERN Sunny and calm, with warm days and mild nights. You feel guilty hunting when you should be mowing the lawn.
BIRD BEHAVIOR Breeding is in full swing, with most gobbling dying off at fly-down as hens match up with toms.
YOUR PLAY Patterning and scouting again becomes critical, but now you're zeroing in on a specific gobbler. Get tight to his roost and coax him in with soft yelping. If the dawn setup doesn't pan out, head for one of your bird's strut zones or a hen feeding area and stake out a half-strut jake decoy paired with a hen. If you're on private land, play on your gobbler's dominance by combining hen yelping with jake gobbles. FS

DONALD M. JONES



GEAR

Take a Load Off

Two innovative packs for gear-intensive gobbler hunts

By M.D. Johnson

Is your back sore from carrying the requisite 1.46 metric tons of calls, camo, and other assorted gear in your turkey vest? These hybrid systems are small packs designed for carrying heavy loads. They have plenty of pockets for all of your gear and perhaps the best turkey seat that you've ever sat on.



↑ | TENZING TZ TP14

$299; tenzingoutdoors.com

THE SPECS 1,700 cubic inches • 7¼ lb. • 12 x 13½-inch padded seat

THE SKINNY I've shot fall hens that have weighed less than this large pack-and-seat unit. But it's loaded with luxuries many turkey hunters want—or don't yet know they want. There are 19 pockets, diaphragm sleeves, an expandable gamebag, and enough pack space for an overnight trip. The integral aluminum frame has a built-in fold-down field chair with a comfortable padded seat and an air-cooled back pad, so even if there's no nearby tree, you'll have a rock-solid backrest.

BONUS With a little top padding, like a rolled-up shirt or jacket, the foldout chair in the TP14 makes a stable elevated shooting rest for a rifle or muzzleloader come fall.

↓ | CABELA'S GROUND HUNTER

$130; cabelas.com

THE SPECS 1,831 cubic inches • 6½ lb. • 10 x 17-inch seat

THE SKINNY Cabela's took two common accessories—the tubular-steel folding chair and the padded backpack—and combined them into one unique package that's ideal for turkey hunters. The Ground Hunter has a variety of pockets, a large interior storage compartment for toting a bird, and three smaller pouches for quick access to calls. The 19-inch-high removable chair with a nylon sling-style seat is especially handy late in the season as grass gets taller and foliage thickens. Older hunters who can't drop all the way down to the forest floor will appreciate the elevated position.

BONUS An insulated, removable cooler attaches below the main compartment to keep refreshments frosty. FS









On the Prowl New wheat lures hungry hens—and lonely toms.

PROJECTS

Last-Minute Turkey Plot

Plant winter wheat for spring gobblers, then kill a bird over it three weeks later **By Michael R. Shea**

Clay Tietjen, an 18-year-old college student from Penn Yan, N.Y., whacked his first gobbler over a spring winter-wheat plot his dad, Jeff, had planted a few weeks prior. Every year since, the Tietjens have gotten their birds in these simple 20 x 20-yard shooting greens. "Really what we're doing is attracting hens," Clay says. "We're growing a meal for them now, and come May the gobblers will follow."

CHOOSE YOUR SPOT

Wheat is hardy, but it still needs sun. The Tietjens look for clear-cuts and other openings in the woods about 200 yards from roost trees. The edges of cattle pastures or cropfields are good places to plant.

PLANT THE SEED

A little more than a month before the season opens, the Tietjens rake up a 20 x 20-yard square and lay down 5 pounds of wheat or buckwheat seed. "If you can get a tractor in, disking and cultipacking works best," Clay says. "If not, a rototiller or landscaping rake can be enough." Rake rows into the dirt 15 inches apart and 1½ inches deep, lay down the seeds, and cover lightly. The Tietjens also leave a strip of broken but unplanted ground along the edges for dusting sites.

SET THE BLIND

While Clay is busting sod, his dad, Jeff, sets up a ground blind about 10 yards from the edge of the plot. This ensures that any tom that steps into the wheat is no more than an easy 30-yard shot away.

WAIT THEM OUT

By opening day the crop is several inches high, providing the turkeys with new shoots and insects to eat. The Tietjens sneak in well before light and sit the whole morning. "Last year the biggest bird I killed walked by at 11:30," Clay says.

JOHN HAFNER

SPECIAL BONUS SECTION

FISHING Handbook

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BILL LINDNER

Taken Down • A trophy bass from Lake of the Woods in Ontario.

Get the Drop

Make your soft plastics look sweeter on the dive to smallmouths

By Will Ryan



Crawfish, baitfish, and hellgrammites in open water all avoid predators by scooting to the bottom. That's why it's so common for smallmouths to strike soft plastics on the drop. To increase the chances that you'll flip the bail and have a fish on right away, try these tweaks to make your baits look even sexier on the descent.

1 WEIGHT LOSS

Lightening up your tube jighead creates a slower rate of fall, and the reduced weight makes it easier to swim tubes over deep weeds without getting covered in vegetation. If you'd normally use a ¼-ounce jighead, try ⅛ ounce. Opt for tube colors that match baitfish, such as golden or silver shiner, instead of crawfish, which aren't apt to be near the top of the weeds. Cast across the flow and let the tube swing downstream as the boat drifts. If you're on the bow, cast farther ahead of the drift and retrieve slightly faster than the current so the tube glides and darts as it falls.

2 SLOW DANCE

In calm or rippled water, wacky rig a Senko and fish it weightless, targeting the outside edges of weedlines, or open patches in deep weeds. On days when the fish are less aggressive, the slow wobbling action of the falling Senko will prove its worth. Use muted colors, like green pumpkin or smoke. Feather line with your finger on the spool as the bait falls, maintaining just enough tension to keep contact. To get an early jump on a strike, watch the spot where your line enters the water for any change in direction or sudden slack.

3 TOUCH OF THE BUBBLY

Some of the biggest summer smallmouths are taken in weedy shallows early and late in the day. To target these fish, insert a bit of plastic bubble wrap into a 3½-inch tube, and then rig it Texas-style on a 1/0 Gamakatsu Skip Gap hook. Next, pinch a small split shot a few feet above the tube. The shot will take the rig to the bottom along thicker weed edges, but the buoyant tube will fall very slowly behind the weight. If it doesn't get hit on the fall, let the rig settle to the bottom. As the tube hovers off the river bed, impart slow hops to mimic a baitfish trying to right itself.

CLIFF GARDINER & JOHN KELLER



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GEAR

The Trout Skinny

Build the perfect microlight spinning outfit to score bigger 'bows and browns

By Mark Modoski



Southern Spin
A Kentucky brown that nailed a Blue Fox Vibrax spinner.

1 LOSE YOUR SEAT

A light trout rod with a Tennessee-style cork handle—which has no fixed reel seat—will improve sensitivity and take a bit of bulk out of your stick. Bass Pro's Microlite ($50) is a great choice. When you attach the reel, anchor the foot first with 3/4-inch masking tape. Next, cover that tape with electrical tape. The masking-tape base will prevent cork damage.

2 REEL SMALL

To keep overall weight low, you want a compact reel that will balance with the rod. Such a setup will increase accuracy and control when casting tiny lures. Look for reels classed for 1- to 4-pound-test, such as Shimano's Sedona 500FD ($60). It doesn't cost more than a dinner for two on a Friday night, and it will handle years of big-trout punishment.

3 USE FINE LINE

Trout are notoriously line-shy. A big mistake anglers make is using line that's too heavy. This is an especially bad idea in clear streams. Use no more than 4-pound-test on a microlight outfit; you'd be wise to opt for fluorocarbon-coated monofilament. I like P-Line's Fluoroclear ($10), as it provides the easy castability of mono with the low visibility of fluorocarbon. FS

MAKE IT NATURAL

Trout can be finicky and spooky. To up your catch rates, eliminate any elements from your presentation that might make your offering look less than natural. Don't be the lazy guy with the snap-swivel. Take the time to tie directly to your lure whenever you make a change. A shiny swivel's added visibility can turn off a picky trout, and even the smallest snaps can affect the action of a tiny lure, especially in fast current. If you're using worms, dough baits, or shiners and need additional weight, opt for split shot instead of a barrel swivel and an egg sinker. Also, use the smallest shot possible that gets the bait down to the fish. The lighter lead reduces the sound of the weight knocking off rocks, keeps you from getting hung up on the bottom, and helps you detect strikes much faster. —M.M.

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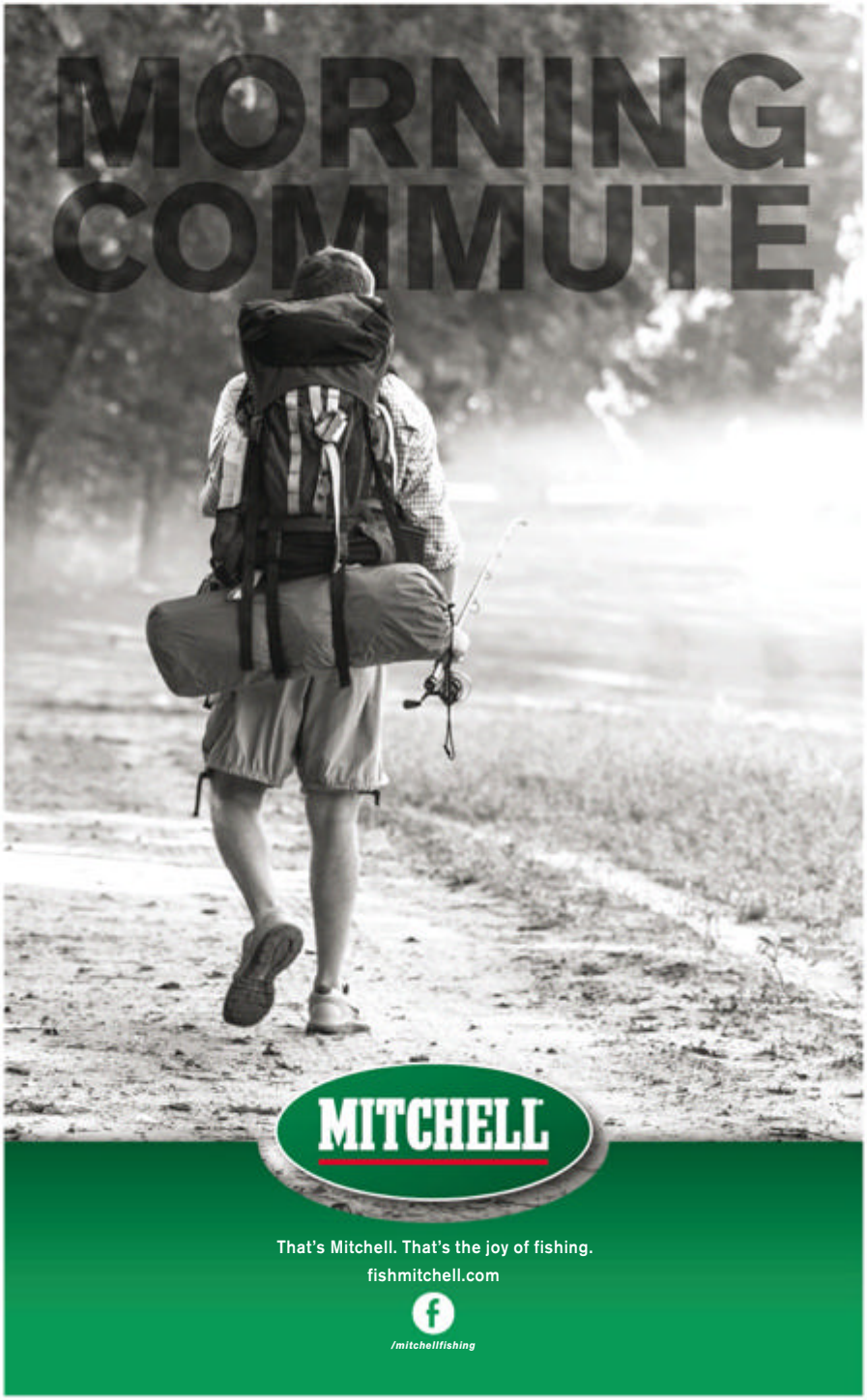
SKILLS

Panfish Practice

Catch more "grown-up" species by flyfishing for bluegills

By Joe Cermele

Most anglers have the bluegill to thank for getting them hooked on fishing. Unfortunately, many also forget about this introductory species after they graduate from dipping worms on the shore of the local park pond. That's a mistake, because not only are bluegills a blast on a light fly rod, but catching them hones your casting and presentation skills, which can help you catch more of the "grown-up" species later.



HAUL FOR IT

Bluegills will eat almost any wet or dry fly, but there is arguably no more enjoyable way to catch them than with small foam poppers. These flies are fairly air-resistant, forcing you to cast with a bit more *oomph*. It's a great excuse to practice your double haul, which will come in handy the next time you need to deliver a bigger popper to bass, or a bulky streamer to trout.

KEEP THE CHANGE

Typically plentiful and aggressive, bluegills provide the perfect opportunity to experiment with retrieve styles that may help you figure out how to work a fly for another species later. Keep changing from letting the popper sit still, to imparting a subtle pop every few seconds, to rapidly chugging it across the surface. Take note of the conditions, and which retrieve scores the most fish. I guarantee you'll be able to use that information later for a more substantial target.

HONE THE ZONE

Since bluegills will hit a fly in almost any conditions, casting to them before switching over to bass can help you locate a few bucketmouths. Take note of how quickly a bluegill eats your fly. If they are piling on and fighting over it, cast farther and farther until strikes diminish. There is a good chance this quiet zone is where a bass is holding in ambush. Switch to a heavier outfit and bomb a larger popper or meaty streamer in this area—a fly that matches a bluegill's color and pattern is a smart choice. FS



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Bunker Bust A New York striper hooked in a bait pod.

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TIPS

A Cut Above

Trim the fins on your big live baits to hook more stripers

By Joe Cermele

In spring, coastal striped bass gorge on menhaden—a.k.a. bunker. In freshwater, landlocked stripers chow down on gizzard shad. Both of these baitfish can measure up to 14 inches, which means they're not likely to get eaten by a small bass. The problem with these species, however, is that they school tightly together, and when stripers are attacking a giant pod of menhaden or shad, the one with the hook in it doesn't stand out from the rest. To make your bait more noticeable, use scissors to cut off one or both of the bait's tail fins. This will hinder its ability to swim with the group, causing it to sink below the school. It will also give your bait a vibration that's different from the others, and stripers often key in on the distressed oddball. FS



REEL WARS 2015

We pitted new low-profile baitcasters against one another to find out which fresh bass buster belongs on your boat (and fits your budget) this season

By Joe Cermele

FIELD TEST

ROBIN FINLAY (PROP STYLING)

GEAR REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST



Battle Formation • The year's new baitcasters line up.

Photographs by ADAM VOORHES

A few months ago, F&S contributor Mark Modoski and I talked our way onto a private lake for a dawn-to-dusk largemouth quest. We started the morning armed with everything from jerkbaits to Carolina rigs to Flukes, and by the time we backed the trailer down the ramp that evening, we'd put 25 bass (and a bunch of pickerel and walleyes) in the net. More important—maybe—is that in 11 hours on the water, and just as many hours off, we put the eight hottest new low-profile baitcasting reels through their paces, testing them for construction, comfort, functionality, performance, and more. Here's how they stacked up.

1



SHIMANO CURADO 200 I HG
$180; FISH.SHIMANO.COM

TOTAL SCORE 92
SPECS 7.2:1 gear ratio • 7.4 oz. • 14-lb.-test/100-yd. line capacity
HITS It fits great in the hand, produced fewer backlashes than any other reel in the test, and outscored some that cost significantly more. Killer value.
MISSES The rubber Power Grip handle knobs are not as comfortable as some. It's a touch heavy.
THE REEL DEAL Quality is emphasized here over flashy looks. With precisely aligned gears that ramp up winching power and reduce friction, this 2015 F&S Best of the Best Award winner won't torque under heavy strain. And it delivers even light baits very far and very accurately. It's a utilitarian tank.

2



PFLUEGER PATRIARCH XT
$250; PFLUEGERFISHING.COM

TOTAL SCORE 89
SPECS 6.4:1 gear ratio • 5.8 oz. • 12/145 line capacity
HITS Ten ball bearings make this sharp-looking new reel buttery smooth on both the cast and the retrieve.
MISSES It isn't cheap, particularly coming from a company that's known for offering affordable tackle.
THE REEL DEAL The new Patriarch is exceptionally light, thanks mainly to the carbon-fiber handle and carbon-infused side plates. You can fish it all day without fatigue, and unlike some light reels, this one doesn't feel cheap. The easy-open side plate makes dialing in the brake a fast, simple task when you're changing lure weights.

5



QUANTUM SMOKE SPEED FREAK PT
$200; QUANTUMFISHING.COM

TOTAL SCORE 79
SPECS 8.1:1 gear ratio • 6.4 oz. • 12/135 line capacity
HITS The whopping 35-inches-per-turn line retrieve gobbles up slack for the set when a bass hits and swims at you.
MISSES Not as smooth to cast as some other models; spool made an audible hiss when spinning fast.
THE REEL DEAL The Speed Freak fished very well, but aside from the high retrieve rate, nothing about its performance really stood out in our tests. Still, it's a good, solid all-around baitcasting reel; it's not too heavy or too light, its spool tension adjusted easily, and it offers quality construction at a decent price.

6



ABU GARCIA REVO BEAST
$350; ABUGARCIA.COM

TOTAL SCORE 77
SPECS 7.1:1 gear ratio • 9.4 oz. • 12/180 line capacity
HITS Oversize handle knobs offer better fighting leverage and a surer grip.
MISSES Large and bulky in the hand, this reel is not as comfortable as the others.
THE REEL DEAL Forget the score on this one. Here's all you need to know: If you want a specialty reel for working big swimbaits and Alabama rigs, this is it. The Beast is a smooth and powerful machine, and its 22-pound drag capacity will come in handy for cranking big baits for big fish. But as an everyday bass reel—which is what we tested for—these features are overkill.

3



13 FISHING CONCEPT C
$230; 13FISHING.COM

TOTAL SCORE 85
SPECS 6.6:1 gear ratio • 6.1 oz. • 12/100 line capacity
HITS Cork handle knobs are unique and very comfortable. Precise brake adjustments are a snap via the easy-access side plate.
MISSES There was a bit too much play in the spool-tension-release button.
THE REEL DEAL As 13 Fishing is a relative newcomer to the market, this wild card's performance really impressed us. The Concept C is a well-made, smooth- and accurate-casting reel with a very hip look. If you're into customization, the company's online Trick Shop lets you handpick your component colors.

4



CABELA'S VERANO
$150; CABELAS.COM

TOTAL SCORE 80
SPECS 7.3:1 gear ratio • 6.85 oz. • 12/130 line capacity
HITS The high retrieve rate is ideal for aggressively working crankbaits and spinnerbaits.
MISSES The spool-tension adjustment was finicky on our test reel. It took more tinkering to dial in than the others.
THE REEL DEAL The Verano seemed heavy in our hands, which isn't a bad thing; it felt solid and rugged—like nothing will break if it bangs around in the boat. We had some minor backlash issues tied to drag adjustments, but all in all, this is a solid reel at a great price that should weather long-term punishment.

7



DAIWA TATULA HD200H
$200; DAIWA.COM

TOTAL SCORE 74
SPECS 6.3:1 gear ratio • 8.1 oz. • 14/165 line capacity
HITS A smaller spool diameter gives this reel a very high line capacity, which can save you with hard-running fish.
MISSES There's a raised flare toward the front of the frame that rubbed sore spots on our fingers.
THE REEL DEAL We had some comfort issues, but this reel is an incredibly smooth caster with tight tolerances. Daiwa's new T-Wing line guide is wide on the top to let line flow out more easily on the cast, and tapered at the bottom to channel it back on evenly. It's a creative feature, though it did not make an obvious difference in casting distance.

8



BROWNING MEDALLION GT
$80; BASSPRO.COM

TOTAL SCORE 65
SPECS 6.4:1 gear ratio • 7 oz. • 12/130 line capacity
HITS For a reel with an entry-level price, it's built with quality components.
MISSES Spool adjustments are not as fine as those on the other reels we tested.
THE REEL DEAL The Medallion has a machined aluminum frame, a forged aluminum spool, and a titanium-coated line guide, but the construction is comparatively poor. A little clunky in the hand, the reel lacks the smooth operation and tight tolerances of the others. If you're on a tight budget and don't get out a lot, it's fine. Otherwise, it may not last for more than a few seasons of hard use.



THE TEST

We spooled all the reels with 8-pound monofilament, matched them with 7-foot medium-action rods, and fished with each for at least an hour during the course of the day. With each reel, we separately flipped and pitched, measured maximum casting distance, and tested accuracy by repeatedly casting to various targets. We engaged the drags at various settings to feel for any hiccups or stuttering. During the process, we awarded scores of 1 to 10 for construction, comfort, drag, adjustability, and casting performance. Finally, we combined our scores for a maximum total of 100 points per reel. —J.C.

READER TEST

POWER IN YOUR PACK

Readers put four portable chargers to the test for an entire season to see which delivered the best packable backup power

By Slaton L. White

For better or worse, portable electronics are increasingly taken afield by sportsmen. What's an outdoor adventure without Candy Crush, right? But how do you keep your smartphone or GPS powered up when you're off the grid? The answer is portable power chargers. We gave four experienced sportsmen four different models to use for an entire season to see which produced the most juice in the most portable and rugged package.









BRUNTON RESYNC
$168; BRUNTONOUTDOOR.COM

★★★★★

THE LOWDOWN Based on performance, durable construction, and value, the 10-ounce Resync took the top spot. Corelli gave it high marks because "it came with the most accessories, including standard and micro USB cables, and a wall charger. Lots of value here."

Anselmo also liked that all required cables were provided. He said the Resync was "quite portable and convenient to carry" and delivered more recharges than any other.

Cone noted that the "back of the power pack has a spot to hold USB adapters for multiple devices. You don't have to carry extra things." To Miller, the charger felt "bombproof in the field."

HITS "Built-in trickle charger." *—Corelli*

MISSES "Bigger and heavier than some of the other units." *—Miller*

MOPHIE JUICE PACK POWERSTATION PRO
$100; MOPHIE.COM

★★★★½

THE LOWDOWN The Mophie (12.6 ounces) won praise for overall durability but lost points because testers felt it didn't deliver as many recharges as the others. Corelli said the unit worked fine with his phone but struggled to fully charge his iPad. On the other hand, it withstood being dropped from his treestand and weathered use in his duck boat with no adverse effects. Miller noted the same. "It's built to stand up to abuse and a drop or two, which happened." But he felt that such a rugged unit should be waterproof, which it isn't.

While the power pack charges quickly, said Cone, "it's too easily drained of power. I can only get three to four charges from it."

HITS "Basic but tough." *—Corelli*

MISSES "USB port covers don't stay in place." *—Cone*

ENERGIZER UNIVERSAL MULTI-PORT CHARGER
$75; ENERGIZER.COM

★★★★

THE LOWDOWN Three testers really liked the performance of this, the smallest of the four models (8 ounces). In particular, they singled out its ability to charge two devices at the same time, which "came in handy on a regular basis," said Anselmo. "Two thumbs up!"

Miller called it "well built and compact. It gave three full charges for a smartphone, which was as good or better than some of the other units tested. It stores a lot of energy for being so small."

For Cone, however, the unit delivered just two charges before it needed to be recharged. "I would expect to find it sold at gas stations," he said. "For what it is, it's overpriced."

HITS "Excellent value." *—Anselmo*

MISSES "The connecting ports are exposed to the elements." *—Corelli*

SOLIO XCELLERATOR + HUB
$99; SOLIO.COM

★★★½

THE LOWDOWN The only model in the bunch with solar charging ability, the Solio (4.6 ounces) was deemed innovative but fragile. "It has the wow factor with solar," said Miller. "It's the real deal." But like the other testers, he worried about overall durability.

When it was all juiced up, the Solio did not deliver as many recharges as the others, noted Corelli. "But because it's a two-in-one unit—both traditional and solar—the unit itself can be recharged in the sun. That's a real plus on a long wilderness trip."

Cone said it was a "great idea, but the solar panel was simply too fragile, and took too long to charge up. The product is worth it, though, for someone who is easy on his equipment."

HITS "Off-the-grid green power." *—Miller*

MISSES "The solar panel is an accident waiting to happen." *—Anselmo*

TEST PANEL

WOODY ANSELMO, 40
Home Hunting/Fishing Area: Pennsylvania
Days Hunted/Fished per Year: 50

KYLE CONE, 29
Home Hunting/Fishing Area: Georgia
Days Hunted/Fished per Year: 300

CHRIS CORELLI, 49
Home Hunting/Fishing Area: New York
Days Hunted/Fished per Year: 50

RUSSELL MILLER, 31
Home Hunting/Fishing Area: Washington
Days Hunted/Fished per Year: 100

RATINGS ★ *ZZZZZZ* ★★ *I'M WAITING* ★★★ *LIVE WIRE* ★★★★ *ZAP!* ★★★★★ *THUNDERBOLT*

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38988100

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FREE
WITH ANY PURCHASE
CENTECH
7 FUNCTION DIGITAL MULTIMETER
ITEM 90899
98025/69096
Item 90899 shown
$14.99 VALUE



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38979061

WOW SUPER COUPON!
SAVE OVER $187
US GENERAL
30", 5 DRAWER TOOL CART
• 704 lb. Capacity
Item 95272 shown
LOT NO. 95272
69397/61427
$162.78 $189.99
REG. PRICE $349.99



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38969510

SUPER COUPON!
INDUSTRIAL EAR MUFFS
LOT NO. 43768
60792/61372
Item 43768 shown
SAVE 60%
$1.99
REG. PRICE $4.99



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38914357

SUPER COUPON!
CENTRAL PNEUMATIC
3 GALLON, 100 PSI OILLESS PANCAKE AIR COMPRESSOR
Item 95275 shown
LOT NO. 95275
60637/61615
SAVE 55%
$39.99 REG. PRICE $89.99



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38941097

SUPER COUPON!
18" MACHETE WITH SERRATED BLADE
LOT NO. 62113
69910/60641
Item 69910 shown
SAVE 61%
$4.99
REG. PRICE $12.99



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38956659

WOW SUPER COUPON!
SAVE $300
12,000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE
LOT NO. 68142/61256 60813/61889
$299.99 $399.99
Item 68142 shown



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38981293

SUPER COUPON!
1.51 CUBIC FT. SOLID STEEL DIGITAL FLOOR SAFE
LOT NO. 91006/61565
SAVE $70
$99.99
Item 91006 shown
REG. PRICE $169.99



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38992367

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RAPID PUMP® 1.5 TON ALUMINUM RACING JACK
PITTSBURGH
• 3-1/2 Pumps Lifts Most Vehicles
• Weighs 27 lbs.
LOT NO. 68053/69252 60569/62160/62496
SAVE $60
$59.99 $80.99
Item 68053 shown
REG. PRICE $179.99



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38955822

SUPER COUPON!
4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER
drillmaster
LOT NO. 95578
69645/60625
Item 60625 shown
SAVE 50%
$9.99
REG. PRICE $19.99



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38923144

WOW SUPER COUPON!
NEW
900 PEAK/ 700 RUNNING WATTS 2 HP (63 CC) 2 CYCLE GAS RECREATIONAL GENERATOR
LOT NO. 66619/69381 60338/62472
SAVE OVER $85
$94.99 $129.99
Item 69381 shown
REG. PRICE $179.99



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38945212

SUPER COUPON!
SUPER-WIDE TRI-FOLD ALUMINUM LOADING RAMP
Ezee-Master
LOT NO. 90018
69595/60334
Item 90018 shown
SAVE $70
$79.99
REG. PRICE $149.99
• 1500 lb. Capacity



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38959368

SUPER COUPON!
WINDSOR DESIGN
60", 4 DRAWER HARDWOOD WORKBENCH
LOT NO. 93454 69054
SAVE $110
$139.99
Item 93454 shown
REG. PRICE $249.99



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38971191

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SAVE 66%
REG. PRICE $29.99
1/4" DRIVE
LOT NO. 2696/61277
3/8" DRIVE
LOT NO. 807/61276
1/2" DRIVE
LOT NO. 239/62431
Item 239 shown



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38977175

WOW SUPER COUPON!

10" SLIDING COMPOUND MITER SAW

SAVE OVER $117

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

Item 98199 shown

LOT NO. 98199/61307 61971/61972

$82.82 ~~$119.99~~

REG. PRICE $199.99

39026269

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SUPER COUPON!

• 1000 lb. Capacity MOVER'S DOLLY

Haul Master

LOT NO. 93888/60497 61899/62399

SAVE 40%

Item 93888 shown

$8.99 REG. PRICE $14.99

39025882

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WOW SUPER COUPON!

RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL WITH 3/8" x 50 FT. HOSE

LOT NO. 93897/69265/62344

SAVE $90

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC

Item 93897 shown

$59.99 ~~$89.99~~

REG. PRICE $149.99

39047109

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SUPER COUPON!

12 VOLT MAGNETIC TOWING LIGHT KIT

Haul Master

SAVE 66%

LOT NO. 69925/69626 67455/62517

Item 67455 shown

$9.99 REG. PRICE $29.99

39034600

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WOW SUPER COUPON!

45 WATT SOLAR PANEL KIT

SAVE $160

LOT NO. 68751/62443

Item 68751 shown

$139.99 ~~$189.99~~

REG. PRICE $299.99

solar

39009213

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SUPER COUPON!

3/8" x 75 FT. CAMOUFLAGE POLY ROPE

Haul Master

SAVE 61%

LOT NO. 47835/61674

Item 47835 shown

$3.49 REG. PRICE $8.99

39017287

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SUPER COUPON!

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Haul Master

Item 41005 shown

SAVE 50%

LOT NO. 41005/69780

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39020614

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SUPER COUPON!

1500 WATT DUAL TEMPERATURE HEAT GUN (572°/1112°)

drillmaster

SAVE 70%

Item 96289 shown

LOT NO. 96289/62340 62546

$8.99 REG. PRICE $29.99

39037449

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SUPER COUPON!

12 VOLT, 10/2/50 AMP BATTERY CHARGER/ ENGINE STARTER

CEN-TECH

LOT NO. 66783/60581 60653/62334

SAVE 62%

Item 60653 shown

$29.99 REG. PRICE $79.99

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SUPER COUPON!

ADJUSTABLE SHADE AUTO-DARKENING WELDING HELMET

SAVE 55%

LOT NO. 46092/61611

Item 46092 shown

$35.99 REG. PRICE $79.99

39046403

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WOW SUPER COUPON!

56", 11 DRAWER INDUSTRIAL QUALITY ROLLER CABINET

US • GENERAL

Item 67681 shown

LOT NO. 67681/69395/62499

SAVE $500

• Weighs 441 lbs.

$699.99 ~~$799.99~~

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39050340

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SUPER COUPON!

WIRELESS SECURITY ALERT SYSTEM

Bunker Hill Security

Item 93068 shown

LOT NO. 93068 69590/61910 62447

SAVE 60%

$11.99 REG. PRICE $29.99

38990721

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ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW SHARPENER

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

4-1/4" grinding wheel included.

Item 68221 shown

SAVE 44%

LOT NO. 68221/61613

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39022574

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SUPER COUPON!

4 PIECE 1" x 15 FT. RATCHETING TIE DOWNS

LOT NO. 90984/60405 61524/62322

Haul Master

Item 90984 shown

SAVE 60%

$7.99 REG. PRICE $19.99

39031256

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WOW SUPER COUPON!

8", 5 SPEED BENCH MOUNT DRILL PRESS

SAVE $50

Item 60238 shown

LOT NO. 60238/62390 62520

$49.99 ~~$99.99~~

REG. PRICE $99.99

39046423

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SUPER COUPON!

3/8" x 14 FT. GRADE 43 TOWING CHAIN

Not for overhead lifting.

Haul Master

LOT NO. 97711/60658

Item 97711 shown

SAVE 55%

$19.99 REG. PRICE $44.99

• 5400 lb. Capacity

39014887

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SUPER COUPON!

10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE

SAVE $120

Item 69039 shown

LOT NO. 69039 60727/62286

$179.99 REG. PRICE $299.99

38988574

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SUPER COUPON!

1/2" INDUSTRIAL QUALITY SUPER HIGH TORQUE IMPACT WRENCH

LOT NO. 68424

• 700 ft. lbs. Max. Torque

SAVE $55

$74.99 REG. PRICE $129.99

38993339

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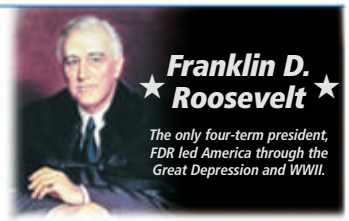
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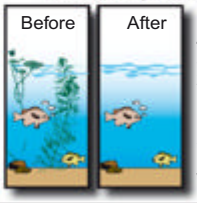
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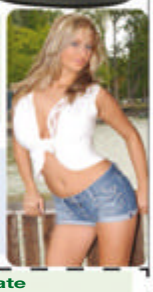


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THE BEAR ESSENTIALS

Hunting is changing, but I've got a way to stay grounded

By Bill Heavey



I RECENTLY RETURNED from the annual SHOT (Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade) Show in Las Vegas. It's a four-day orgy of stuff you don't need. Yet. But if the marketing guys push the right buttons, you'll change your mind. Weird as it is, SHOT is a core sample of the American outdoorsman's psyche. And what we secretly long to be is one of two things: an elite sniper, or the first member of a three-man SWAT team through the door. The identity of the enemy is unclear, but it doesn't matter. What does is that we are up to the mission. We are professionals, immune to either fear or pity. We are competent, lethal, not to be messed with. And all that stands between us and our heroic best selves is the proper hardware: ARs in exotic calibers—the 6.5 Grendel, the .300 Blackout—that bristle with night scopes, lasers, computerized ballistics calculators, and silencers the size of salamis.

By the time I got home, I felt strangely tainted. I'd been exposed to too much technology, too much of the invisible desire machine that makes us want it. So I did what I've done every few years for about four decades. I dipped back into the flat-out best hunting story ever written, William Faulkner's "The Bear."

I warn you. Faulkner is everything that SHOT is not. He doesn't give a damn about being user-friendly. If anything, he goes out of his way to be difficult. His stream-of-consciousness style veers from reality to myth and back again. He'll uncork a page-long sentence without warning. He often dispenses with fact entirely in pursuit of truths larger than mere facts. If you're confused, you've got company. Scholars still debate whether the thing is a long short story or a short novel. It often reads as if Faulkner wrote "The Bear" for an audience of one—himself.

But it's worth the whistle. Whatever his faults, Faulkner has hunting in his marrow. Read this description of wilderness and hunters who go there "with the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive, and the dogs and the bear and deer juxtaposed and reliefed against it, ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness in the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter."

Told you.

The story unfolds through the eyes of Ike—first as a boy of 10, then as an accomplished woodsman of 16. He is the youngest in a group of hunters who journey each fall to the Big Bottom to run dogs on deer and other game. To Ike, hunting isn't a pastime. The woods are his school, his path to manhood, his only possible salvation. He is ravenous for the skill, humility, and pride by which a man may prove worthy of being called a hunter. For as long as Ike has been alive, the main event of the annual trip has been the hunt for Old Ben, who is not just a bear, but *the* bear. He's a mythic creature, the spirit of the wilderness made flesh—ancient, indomitable, destructive, elusive, light-years beyond such man-made concepts as good or evil. He has absorbed countless charges of ball, shot, and bullets, all "with no more effect than so many peas blown through a tube by a child." The hunters no longer expect to kill Old Ben. The chase is more ceremony than hunt, an offering to the ancient primacy and unfathomable power of the natural world. And these same men—and, by extension, all men—have already doomed the wilderness. They—we—don't hesitate to exploit and destroy it for their own gain.

I won't ruin the story by telling you how it ends. It will lift your soul even as it breaks your heart, the way hunting exalts your skill as it sears you with knowledge that the world won't miss a beat at your exit.

It's tough to explain why you love a given book, especially one as convoluted and difficult as this one. I reread "The Bear" because it affirms things I believe. Because it articulates them better and more deeply than I can. Because underlying every word I feel Faulkner's knowledge that hunting is how certain men fill a need felt by all of us—to connect an individual consciousness to the universal one, the one that has always been and will be, the one whose powers, rhythms, and mysteries move all things.

Even when Ike is sent back to the city to replenish the hunters' store of whiskey, the mere fact of clearing weather and the prospect of hunting make his world more vivid. "He felt the old lift of the heart, as pristine as ever, as on the first day; he would never lose it, no matter how old in hunting and pursuit: the best, the best of all breathing, the humility and the pride."

There is no Faulkner booth at the SHOT Show. Maybe there ought to be. FS

Illustration by **JACK UNRUH**

Vol. 119, No. 11. FIELD & STREAM (ISSN 1554-8066, USPS 570-650) is published monthly except for a combined December–January issue, by Bonnier Corp., 2 Park Ave., New York, NY 10016. © 2015 by Bonnier Corp. All rights reserved. Reprinting in whole or part is forbidden except by permission of Bonnier Corp. FIELD & STREAM and trout and Canada goose emblems are registered trademarks of Bonnier Corp. MAILING LIST: We make a portion of our mailing list available to reputable firms. If you would prefer that we not include your name, please write us at the Harlan, IA, address below. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. Non-postal and military facilities: Send address changes to FIELD & STREAM, PO Box 6964, Harlan, IA 51593-1864. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $19.97 for one year; please add $8 per year for Canadian addresses and $16 per year for all other international addresses. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40612608. Canada Post Return: IMEX Global Solutions, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2 Canada. Printed in the USA.

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